

# AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

## CONGRESS SIMULATION GUIDE

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### DAY 1 – COMMITTEE SIMULATION

Normally, committees would be formed based on bill topics – as you have seen when you had to determine the relevant committee for your bill. For the purposes of this simulation, the class will simply be divided into groups which will serve as mock committees. In your group, you will receive several of your classmates' bills to read through and either pass as-is, amend and pass, or reject. Those bills which are passed – with or without amendments – will be used in the **Day 2** simulation with the whole class.

### Steps for the Committee Simulation

1. Appoint a committee "chairperson" to read your assigned bills and run the process.
2. Once a bill is read, the chairperson asks if the group wants to vote on the bill as-is.
  - a. The chairperson should allow committee members time to discuss and debate until they are ready to vote on the bill as-is.
  - b. Take a vote. (**NOTE!** Members should only vote "yes" (or "yea") if they do not want to change the bill in any way. Otherwise, vote "no" (or "nay") and wait for the amending phase.) If a majority votes in favor of the bill as it is written, it is automatically passed. Write the number of votes in-favor and the number of votes against the bill on the bill itself, along with **PASSED**, then move on the next bill.
  - c. If the bill is rejected during this vote (with more votes against it), then move on to step 3.
3. If the bill is voted down as-is, the chairperson will open the discussion for amendments (proposed changes to the bill). The chairperson must recognize a member before he/she speaks in both proposing and discussing/debating bills.
  - a. At this point, any committee member may propose an amendment. **Each amendment** must be discussed and voted **on one at a time** before moving on to another, and can only be added to the bill if a majority agrees. Amendments that are passed must be written down on the bill, adding on to it (as a new Section of the bill). Rejected amendments should not be written in.
  - b. If members want to move on to another amendment without holding a final vote on the current one, they may opt to "table" it – setting it aside for later. Note that tabled amendments must be dealt with before a final vote is held on the bill.
  - c. Once there are no more proposed amendments, the amending phase ends.
  - d. If amendments have been made, move on to step 4.
  - e. If no amendments were proposed during the amending phase, then the bill has failed. Write **REJECTED** on the bill and set it aside.
4. If amendments have been made, the chairperson holds a vote on the changed bill. If a majority vote in favor, record the vote totals and write **PASSED** on the bill and move on to another bill.



## DAY 2 – FULL HOUSE FLOOR DEBATE SIMULATION

### Rules and Tools for Floor Debate

Normally, the actual rules for debate are determined by the Rules Committee, making it one of the most powerful committees. Mr. Peyton will be standing in for the Speaker of the House, meaning he will choose which bills to introduce, and when. He will also be maintaining the flow of the floor debate, which will generally flow as follows:

#### Introduction Phase

- The Speaker (Mr. Peyton) will introduce and read through a bill.
- The bill's author will have up to three minutes to argue in favor of his/her bill.

#### Debate Phase

- The Speaker will open the floor for debate. Any representative that wishes to speak must attract the Speaker's attention and be recognized before addressing the House. Members may continue to debate, provided they are first recognized by the Speaker.
- At any time, a member may propose a motion to end debate and vote on the bill as-read.
- If a motion to vote on the bill as-read is made, the Speaker will call for a second.
- If another member seconds the motion, the Speaker will ask if any member opposes (usually because he/she wishes to offer an amendment to the bill).

#### Amendment Phase

- The speaker will open the floor for amendments. Members wishing to offer an amendment may do so once recognized by the Speaker.
- After each amendment is proposed, the Speaker opens the floor for debate on that particular amendment.

#### “Closing” Options – Voting and “Tabling”

- If there are no objections at the end of the first debate phase, the bill may be voted on. Any member may, if he/she chooses, request a roll-call vote instead of a simple hand-raise count. During a roll-call vote, each member's voice vote is entered into the official record when his/her name is called.
- Every proposed amendment must be “closed” before a new one is allowed – either by a vote (motion, then second, then vote), or by “tabling” the amendment – setting it aside, or putting it “on the table” temporarily.
- Whole bills may also be tabled, if a member move to table it, another member seconds the motion, and there are no objections.

### General Decorum – Some Tips on Being a Representative

As participants in this legislative exercise, you and your colleagues will gain from the experience what you put into it. It is essential that you adhere to your role at all times.

- You are always speaking to the chair.
- A member must attract the chair's attention by saying "Mr. Speaker".
- Thus, remarks commonly begin with "Mr. Speaker".
- Do not refer to your colleagues directly when addressing a committee or the chamber. For instance, if you wish to comment on the remarks of a colleague you would say, "Mr. Speaker, my distinguished colleague from Maryland has just said black is white and I would like to point out that . . . ."
- To ask a question or to make a comment while another member is speaking, you would say, "Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman (gentlewoman) yield?"
- You should refer to yourself as "I."
- To signify the conclusion of your remarks: "I yield back the balance of my time."
- To ask for clarification of the parliamentary situation: "A parliamentary inquiry, Mr. Speaker."
- To do something not permitted by the rules: "I ask unanimous consent that . . . ."
- To discuss or ask for clarification of a unanimous consent request: "Reserving the right to object . . . ."
- To enforce a rule: "I make a point of order against on the grounds that . . . ."