

Writing Legislation

While UIL rules do not mandate that each school or legislator submit bills (proposed laws) or resolutions (position statements of conviction) as a requirement for participating in Congress, authoring legislation provides excellent research and technical writing experience for students and gives them the right to deliver the authorship speech which introduces the bill or resolution to the congressional assembly. This provides a guaranteed opportunity to deliver three minutes of constructive speech on the legislation, a clear advantage for Congress competitors.

WRITING EFFECTIVE LEGISLATION

Writing an effective piece of legislation will require the legislator to research an important issue, discover what constituents are impacted by the problem, and explore how the issue can best be addressed. It demands study of implementation, if it is a bill: which government agency would best implement the legislation and the amount of time required before it is implemented. These areas must be considered in the planning stages and then directly addressed within the written legislation. Although resolutions lack the force of law they also require research before writing begins.

UIL Congress is a mock national Congress; therefore, any legislation submitted must be within the jurisdiction of the United States Congress. Legislation that affects only the state of Texas should be avoided. All legislation should be written on a single page using double-spaced, Calibri 12 point font. Using templates posted on the UIL Congress webpage will ensure consistency in formatting. At the end of each piece of legislation, there should be a confirmation that the legislation is the original work of the school, including a label with the school's name (not the student's name).

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA WHEN DEVELOPING LEGISLATION:

Debatability: Legislation with clear arguments on both sides generates solid debate and promotes an equal amount of speeches on both the affirmative and negative side.

Interest: Select an issue that not only engages critical thinking, but that also has a high level of interest on the part of students, scorers and parliamentarians.

Recency: Is the issue current? Develop legislation around a fresh topic that is not overly debated.

Jurisdiction: Can the United States Congress really do this? Has the correct governmental body been designated to enforce the legislation?

Clarity: Is the intent of the legislation clear? Legislation should be written concisely.

Unique: Is the legislation the original work of the student and the school? Guard against plagiarism. Schools should never submit legislation for UIL competition that was not authored by the school's students. Students may paraphrase from published sources but direct quotations are not allowed in legislation. Plagiarism is unacceptable. Coaches must affirm that the legislation submitted is original and a statement of confirmation must be included at the bottom of each legislation submitted for consideration. Refer to the UIL template that follows this discussion.