



# Writing Effective Congress Legislation

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# Legislation is Not Required for Participation but Advisable!



- ▶ I recommend that you have students write the legislation.
- ▶ Students are better able to explain and argue legislation they have a vested interest in.
- ▶ Coaches should serve as proofreaders.



# Legislation Should Be Federal in Nature



- ▶ No state specific legislation.
- ▶ Ex// A Resolution to encourage Texas schools to fund the arts.
- ▶ No foreign country specific legislation.
- ▶ Ex// A Bill to change China's emission laws.
- ▶ No foreign agency legislation.
- ▶ Ex// A resolution to change the UN's nuclear inspection timelines.

# Bills vs. Resolutions

- ▶ Bill – Will become law and established details about how the law will work.



- ▶ Resolution – Suggestions on federal action
- ▶ Congress does not have jurisdiction / resolutions lack force of law





# UIL Provides Great Templates

- ▶ Visit [uiltexas.org](http://uiltexas.org) and the speech and debate congress page. There are useful templates on the right side of the screen for both bills and resolutions.



# So What Makes For Great Legislation

- ▶ First and foremost... Format is so important.
- ▶ Use the templates!
- ▶ Double-Spaced!
- ▶ Sections or Resolved Statements Present!
- ▶ Fits on One Page!
- ▶ The following slides will go further in depth on specific things to look for. (Mostly stolen I mean borrowed!)





# DEADLINE

- ▶ Find out who your region clerk is and get that legislation in by the prescribed deadline!



# AUTHORSHIP

- ▶ Make sure that the “Introduced by...” statement at the bottom is italicized and includes the school name not the student name





# ORIGINALITY

- ▶ Make sure the work is original and not plagiarized.



# Citations and Fact-Checking

- ▶ It is ok to include citations in a bill or resolution.
- ▶ This is not a MLA format at the end but instead a simple “According to...” statement in the text of the legislation.
- ▶ Remember that coaches are the final line of defense for checking these things.





# CHALLENGING

- ▶ Make sure that the legislation is inspiring critical thinking.
- ▶ For example, marijuana legislation is very debatable but often times doesn't equate to 'high' levels of critical thinking.



# SCHOOL/COMMUNITY APPROPRIATENESS

- ▶ No one is saying that controversial issues should not be debated. Please though limit topics to what you deem appropriate.
- ▶ You will also encounter students from a wide variety of schools at district and state levels. Don't write legislation in an attempt to exclude different kids from the conversation.
- ▶ Remember – State Finals is Streamed at the Capitol





# JURISDICTION

- ▶ Otherwise known as... “Can Congress do this?”
- ▶ This is the first thing that my students look at because it is often the worst offense in legislation. This simple fact or answer to the question has the potential to stall debate.
- ▶ Also make sure that the correct governmental body is handling the issue in bills.



# INTERESTING

- ▶ Make sure that the legislation is something that not only inspires high levels of thinking but that it is also interesting.
- ▶ This means interesting for students, judges, and parliamentarians.
- ▶ For example, while tax reform and law is important, often times it is not the most exciting to debate. If you don't believe me, you have not judged a round where it was debated.





# DEBATABILITY

- ▶ Make sure that arguments exist on both sides.
- ▶ If you write a bill or resolution that is one-sided, it creates the infinite number of students with speeches on one side and does not allow for clash.



# RECENCY

- ▶ Make sure that the legislation falls in line with current events.
- ▶ Self-explanatory right?





# NEWNESS

- ▶ Make sure that the legislation has not been debated too frequently.
- ▶ There is the potential for all sorts of debate. Let's not constrict it by debating the same issues over and over.



# Finally... Ease Students Into Legislation

- ▶ Writing legislation is intimidating for new students.
- ▶ Have them write fun bills and resolutions and debate them first as a way to ease them into it.
- ▶ EX// A Bill to Ban Reality Television
- ▶ EX// A Resolution to Encourage the Creation of Sharknado 4.
- ▶ HAVE FUN!!