



# OLD CAPITOL MUSEUM

DIRECTING DEMOCRACY TEACHING GUIDE



The House of Representatives Chamber in the Old Capitol has played host to some of the most important debates in the history of Mississippi and the United States. Directing Democracy allows students the opportunity to debate important topics and ideas in the same historic room. The program walks students through the process of writing a bill, debating that bill, and even voting on it. The Old Capitol Museum staff is excited to help facilitate this unique opportunity.

Goal: Civics and the legislative process are best learned through practice. Students will work together to create bills to address issues important to them and then will debate the bills in the state's most historic building, the Old Capitol Museum. This exercise will allow students to learn about the legislative process through experience.

Students will:

- Model the legislative process
- Create and debate a bill
- Communicate with others about topics important to their community and peer group

Materials

- Paper, three sheets per student
- Pens
- Appendix A, one copy per student
- Appendix B, one copy per student
- Appendices C–G, one copy per three students

### **Before the Field Trip:**

Resource: We have provided a PowerPoint presentation to introduce your class to Mississippi's legislative process. On slide five, the highlighted boxes indicate the steps for this activity.

**1. Roles:** Give students copies of Appendices A and B and read through them as a class. Instruct students to use paper and pens to create name cards that read "Representative (last name) from (a county)." Have the class vote on the roles of Speaker of the House and Clerk, with a simple majority (**greater than 50%**) carrying the vote. Those students will then sit at the front of the chamber, where they will preside over the activity at the Old Capitol Museum. Have the two students add their new titles to their name cards.

**2. Groups:** Split the class into groups of three to five students, including the Speaker and the Clerk, who should not be assigned to the same group. Assign each group a random number as their House Bill number for the program. Ask each group to then choose a spokesperson. The Speaker of the House and the Clerk may not be spokespersons for their groups.

**3. Topics and Rules:** Give each group a copy of the Appendices C–G. Go over Appendix C in small groups. As a whole class, brainstorm topics using Appendix D. Teach the bill writing process using Appendices E–G.

**4. Creating a Bill:** Give the groups time to create a bill, asking them to hand in a completed version before your trip to the Old Capitol Museum. Inform the groups that they are responsible for a speech introducing their bills that will last one to three minutes, and remind them that they also must give a summation that may last as long as five minutes.

**5. Create the Docket:** Before you arrive at the Old Capitol Museum, pick up the bills, and put them in order according to the group bill number. This order will become the docket. Make sure to include headings of each bill in the docket.

**6. Pre-trip Reminders:** Remind students not to bring food or drink into the House Chamber or on the second and third floor of the Old Capitol Museum and to respect the furniture in the museum.

### During the Field Trip:

1. Come to the Old Capitol Museum at the time you reserved.
2. Once the class enters the House of Representatives Chamber, a staff member will help facilitate the program.
3. At the conclusion of the program, a staff member will help students to exit and transition to the next activity.

### After the Field Trip:

1. **Evaluate the Program:** You will receive an evaluation following your trip. Please complete and email it to [info@oldcapitolmuseum.com](mailto:info@oldcapitolmuseum.com).
2. **Topics to discuss with your students:**
  - Public speaking
  - Bill writing
  - A bill's legislative success
  - Understanding of legislative roles

## Appendix A: Important Terms

### Roles

**Author**—A representative who writes the bill and presents the bill to the chamber. The author participates in the presentation and summation during the session. For this exercise, the spokesperson for each group will act as the author during debate.

**Speaker of the House**—Elected presiding officer of the House of Representatives. The Speaker keeps order in the House and is the tie-breaking vote.

**Clerk**—Chief administrative officer of the House of Representatives. The clerk counts votes, keeps up with the docket, takes notes, and keeps time during the session.

### Terms to Know

**Author Presentation**—The author gives a one to three minute address to introduce a bill to the state legislature.

**Bill**—A legislative proposal introduced by a member of the legislature. Bills are designated as House of Representatives or Senate according to the body in which they are introduced and assigned numbers according to the order in which they are introduced. See Appendix F for an example.

**Docket**—A list of bills to be discussed.

**Motion for Final Passage**—A motion made at the end of an author's summation to bring a bill to a final vote.

**Recognition**—When the Speaker allows a representative to speak during the session.

**Representative**—A member of the House of Representatives; an elected official representing others in state legislature.

**Simple Majority**—A number or percentage equaling more than fifty percent.

**Statute**—A law enacted by the legislative branch of government.

**Summation**—After debating the bill, the author has up to five minutes to summarize the bill and respond to anything brought up. See A Guide to Pro-Con Debate on Appendix B.

**Veto**—The rejection of a bill by the head of the executive branch.

**Well**—The area in front of the Speaker from which representatives or senators address the chamber.

**Yield the Well**—After speaking, the representative will sit down to allow others to speak.

# Appendix B: Legislative Debate

## A Guide to Legislative Debate

The **Speaker of the House** calls the House to order, reads the heading of the next bill on the docket, and invites the **bill author** to present a bill. After the author is recognized, the author may approach the **well**. The author will have one to three minutes to present the bill, at which time the author must **yield the well** and sit down. From there, the Speaker will open the floor to debate, alternating between representatives in favor of the bill and representatives against the bill, each speech to last between one and three minutes. This is known as pro-con debate, and instructions are included below. Once there are no more representatives wishing to speak on the bill, or the time limit has elapsed, the Speaker will recognize the bill author, who will give a **bill summation**, not to last longer than five minutes. After the author concludes the summation and makes a **motion for final passage**, the Speaker will move to vote on the bill, asking first for the Ayes then the Nays via a raised-hand vote. The Clerk will then count the votes. In the event of a tie, the Speaker will serve as the tie-breaking vote. It is important to note each member of the legislature will be addressed as “Representative (name) from (a county).”

## A Guide to Pro-Con Debate

**Pro-con debate** is the heart of legislative debate. The **Speaker of the House** will open the debate by asking if there are any **representatives** wishing to speak in favor of the proposed bill. Those wishing to speak in favor will raise their hands, and the Speaker of the House will choose one representative to speak at a time. The chosen representative will approach the **well**, speak for one to three minutes, then **yield the well**. Then the Speaker of the House will ask if any representatives wish to speak in opposition to the bill. The opposition speaker will have one to three minutes to speak against the bill. This process will continue until the fifteen-minute time limit is up or one side of the debate runs out of speakers, whichever comes first. Note that during this time, a spokesperson may write their summation, which will be delivered after the debate period to address topics brought up during debate.

# Appendix C: Debate in the House of Representatives

Speaker of the House: (Reads off the docket for the day) I move that we introduce House Bill Number \_\_\_\_

Representative \_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_ County: I second the motion.

Speaker of the House: Is the author present?

Bill Author: Mr. / Madame Speaker I wish to speak on the bill.

Author Presentation 1-3 min

The floor is open for questions after presentation

Speaker of the House: Do I hear a motion to begin debate on this bill?

Representative \_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_ County: I motion to open the floor for debate.

Representative \_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_ County: I second the motion to open the well for debate.

Speaker of the House: Is there anyone wishing to speak for the bill?

Pro-Con Debating

Speaker of the House: It is now time for the author's summation. Does the author wish summation time?

Author of bill: Yes

Author Presents Summation (not to last more than 5 minutes)

At the end of the summation, the author says: And with that I move that the House Bill be placed on final passage.

Speaker of the House: Are you ready for the vote? The question is on adoption of bill. All in favor, say Aye.

All opposed say Nay.

Clerk counts the votes for each

Speaker of the House: The Ayes/Nays have it. If there is no other objection, this bill does/does not pass.

# Appendix D: Example Bill Topics

## Possible Topics:

Infrastructure reform

Uniforms in schools

Changing the minimum driving age

Animal cruelty

State lottery

Free college tuition

Texting and driving

Healthy snacks in schools

Off-campus lunch

Standardized testing

\*Federal statutes (**laws**) cannot be discussed on the state level because the United States Congress has jurisdiction.

# Appendix E: How to Write a Bill

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
4. **A BILL**
5. **TO BE ENTITLED**
- 6.
7. **An act regarding uniforms in public schools in the state of Mississippi.**
8. **Be it enacted by the Legislature of the Old Capitol Museum.**
9. **Section I. DEFINITIONS:**
10. **Public Schools—** Schools that depend on public funding.
11. **Uniforms—**A set dress code adhered to by students within a school
12. **Students—**Schoolchildren who attend a given school
13. **Section II. PROVISIONS:**
14. **The Department of Education will establish a dress code for all students enrolled in Mississippi Public Schools.**
15. **Elementary students, Middle School students, and High School students will have different uniforms. Once the**
16. **uniforms are decided upon by the Department of Education, school districts will have until the 2021—2022 school**
17. **year to adopt and implement the dress code.**
18. **Section III. PENALTIES:**
19. **- Any school district found not to be implementing the dress code will be subject to disciplinary action by**
20. **the Department**
21. **- Any student not within dress code will be subject to consequences as determined by their respective school**
22. **district.**
23. **Section IV. EFFECTIVE DATE:**
24. **This act shall take effect the first day of the 2021—2022 school year.**
- 25.
- 26.
- 27.
- 28.
- 29.
- 30.

**Bill Caption**—Explain what the bill will do.

**Definitions**—Define any terms within the bill that may be confusing or unclear.

**Provisions**—Explain how the bill will attain its purpose — the actions that will be taken to achieve the bill’s ultimate goal.

**Penalties**—Spell out the consequences of not following the bill.

**Effective Date**—Set a date for the bill to take effect. The standard is 90 days after the adjournment of the Legislative Session.

# Appendix F: Example Bill

HB 0038

1.  
2. **BILL CAPTION:**  
3. **An act regarding uniforms in public schools in the state of Mississippi.**

4.  
5. **Be it enacted by the Legislature of the Old Capitol Museum.**

6.  
7. **Section I. DEFINITIONS:**

8. **Public Schools—Schools that depend on public funding.**

9. **Uniforms—A set dress code adhered to by students within a school**

10. **Students—Schoolchildren who attend a given school**

11.  
12. **Section II. PROVISIONS:**

13. The Department of Education will establish a dress code for all students enrolled in Mississippi Public  
14. Schools. Elementary students, Middle School students, and High School students will have different  
15. uniforms are decided upon by the Department of Education, school districts will have until the 2021  
16. – 2022 school year to adopt and implement the dress code.

17.  
18. **Section III. PENALTIES:**

19. - Any school district found not to be implementing the dress code will be subject to disciplinary  
20. action by the Department  
21. - Any student not within dress code will be subject to consequences as determined by their  
22. respective school district.

23.  
24. **Section IV. EFFECTIVE DATE:**

25. **This act shall take effect the first day of the 2021–2022 school year.**  
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# Appendix G: Bill Template

1. **HB #**
- 2.
3. An act
- 4.
5. Be it enacted by the Legislature of the Old Capitol Museum.
- 6.
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- 8.
9. **Section I. DEFINITIONS:**
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14. **Section II. PROVISIONS:**
- 15.
- 16.
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- 18.
19. **Section III. PENALTIES**
- 20.
- 21.
22. **Section IV. EFFECTIVE DATE:**
23. This act shall take effect 90 days after the adjournment of the Old Capitol Museum Legislature.
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