

L et's Journey with a Law

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Overview

Topic: Civics, Government, Legislation. This lesson will help students understand the process that it takes a bill to become a law. Students will also gain a better understanding of the role of Representatives, Delegates, Senators, Governors, and the President.

Time Allotment

Two 45-minute lessons

Media Components

My America #9, How Our Laws Are Made 

TV/VCR with remote control

Computer with Internet access and TV hook-up or
Computer lab access

Web browser

Web Applications: Students will use the websites to
research and gain more detailed information
about making laws.

Websites:

Virginia Legislature Kid's Corner: How Bills
Become Laws

legis.state.va.us/vaonline/kk1.htm

Ben's Guide to U.S. Government for Kids

[bensguide.gpo.gov/3-5/lawmaking/
example.html](http://bensguide.gpo.gov/3-5/lawmaking/example.html)

Learning Objectives

The student will be able to:

- explain why laws are important and how they help Americans
- identify the steps a bill goes through to become a law

- gain an understanding of the branches of government for Virginia and the Nation.

(This lesson addresses Va. SOL History and Social Science 3.10, VS.10a, USI.7b)

Materials

For each student:

- Worksheet #1 and #2 (attached)
- scissors
- glue
- construction paper
- poster board
- markers

For the teacher:

- chart paper
- markers

Teacher Preparations

- Familiarize yourself with how laws are made in Virginia and their influence on how laws are made in Congress.
- Test the websites so that you feel comfortable with using the sites.
- Preview the video.
- Have video ready to begin with the first learning activity.



- Make copies of each worksheet for each student.
- For culminating activity 1 provide a flier that has been partially started to give the students an idea of what you expect.
- Have materials ready that students will be using on the fliers or posters, construction paper, scissors, glue, markers, and poster board.
- For group activity, it helps to have the groups already assigned.

Introductory Activity

Ask students what is something in the class that they feel is not right and should be changed? To whom do you go to change it? Brainstorm ways the students think rules in the class should be made or changed. Put this list on chart paper.

Focus for Media Interaction

SAY: Now we're going to see a video segment about how bills are made. I want you to be able to identify the steps bills take in becoming laws. Have class make a list of causes they know about that people are trying to do something to correct. (Direct students toward such causes as save the rainforests, whales, and etc. If manatees aren't mentioned tell them that this is another animal that people are trying to protect.)

Pause vs. Stop

When using a video interactively with students, teachers need to decide when to use **PAUSE** and when to use **STOP**. **PAUSE** the video when the anticipated discussion or activity will take less than two minutes. **STOP** for longer periods. Pausing for too long at one time can cause video heads on the VCR to become clogged which may require cleaning to correct.

Learning Activities

1. FOCUS: In this first segment see if your definition of a law is the same as the one mentioned in

the video. **START** after Learning About Laws sign. **PAUSE** after manatee is shown. **ASK:** How was your definition different or similar to the video? What kind of law do you think should be made involving a manatee? (Check for prior knowledge of manatees and their problems with motorboats.)

2. FOCUS: In this next segment we will find out what problem the manatees are having. See if you can identify what the conflict is? **RESUME**. **PAUSE** after narrator says "There are two sides to this story." **ASK:** How would you solve this problem? Have students brainstorm what law they think should be made to protect the manatees?

3. FOCUS: Listen for ways that boys and girls like you can do to improve the life of a manatee. **RESUME**. **STOP** after girls give ideas on what kids can do. Lead students in a discussion about what they would like to change in their community and how they would go about changing it. **ASK:** Is there an area of our community that needs to be improved? What improvements do you think need to be made? Who would you tell about the problem?

4. FOCUS: Let's listen to see how an idea begins the journey of becoming a law. **FAST FORWARD** to manatee swimming (approx. 5 minutes into the video). **PLAY**. **PAUSE** after boy explains about the Governor signing bills. Have students fill in the flowchart, Worksheet 1 on how a bill becomes a law. To assist students in doing this have them go to legis.state.va.us/vaonline/kk1.htm as they work on their flowcharts. This is a website on how bills become laws in Virginia. **ASK:** Do you think laws are made for our nation like they are in our state? What might be similar or different?

5. FOCUS: Now we're going to learn about how the journey of a law for the nation. See if you can find out where our nation's laws are made? **RESUME**. **STOP** after word Senate. Allow students to answer the question you gave before viewing this segment. **FOLLOW UP:** How is the Senate involved in the passage of laws? How is this similar to the state of Virginia? If you were to change your flowchart to show how bills become laws for the nation, how would it be different?

6. FOCUS: Listen to see if there are any differences between how Virginia's laws are made and how the Nation's laws are made. **FAST FORWARD** to poster of how a bill is made. (approx. 7 minutes and 45 seconds into the video) **PLAY.** **STOP** after Senator demonstrates how the bill becomes a law. **ASK:** What differences did you find? On the back of their flowcharts, have students draw a line to separate their page and write "State" at the top of one column and "Nation" at the top of the other. Write the steps for how bills are made in each column. Have students use a crayon to underline the parts that are the same and circle the parts that are different. Have students compare their answers. Have students refer to bensguide.gpo.gov/3-5/lawmaking/example.html to help determine if they have the process correct.

Culminating Activities

1. Ask students what concerns about classroom behavior or school behavior they have that they think laws should be made to improve? (Record answers on chart paper to be posted in the room.) Divide the class into groups of four. Each group can pick a concern from the previous list or come up with another problem to solve. Each group will make fliers, posters, etc. to promote their bill. Ask students what the next step is in making a law.
2. Divide the class into two houses, and pick a student to be the Governor/President. Students in the "Senate" and "House" will debate the bills. Those that pass both houses will be sent to the "Governor/President" to consider. Have students share the bills that became laws with the Principal and other classes.
3. Ask students to compare the list of how they think classroom rules should be changed (from introductory activity) to the actual process for how laws are made. Ask the students if they would like to change anything about their first list? Have them make changes.

Assessment

Give students Worksheet 2 with the steps it take a bill to become a law and have them paste them in order on another sheet of paper. Under each step students should write a sentence about what each one means. (This also could be done in a Word Processor and pasted on the page.)

Community Connections

1. Take a field trip to the General Assembly in Richmond after the session is over. This will allow students to get the opportunity to sit in the House Chambers and actually vote on a bill.
2. Have your Delegate, Representative or Senator come to visit the class.
3. Take a field trip to the local governing body, City Council or Board of Supervisors to learn how decisions are made on a local level.

Cross-Curricular Extensions

Language Arts: Research what other animals are victims of living near humans similar to the manatee, and determine a way to help them.

Art: Make posters to give to other classrooms on how laws are made.

Social Studies: Find out what the structure of US Congress is based on, include the influence from the Greeks and Romans.

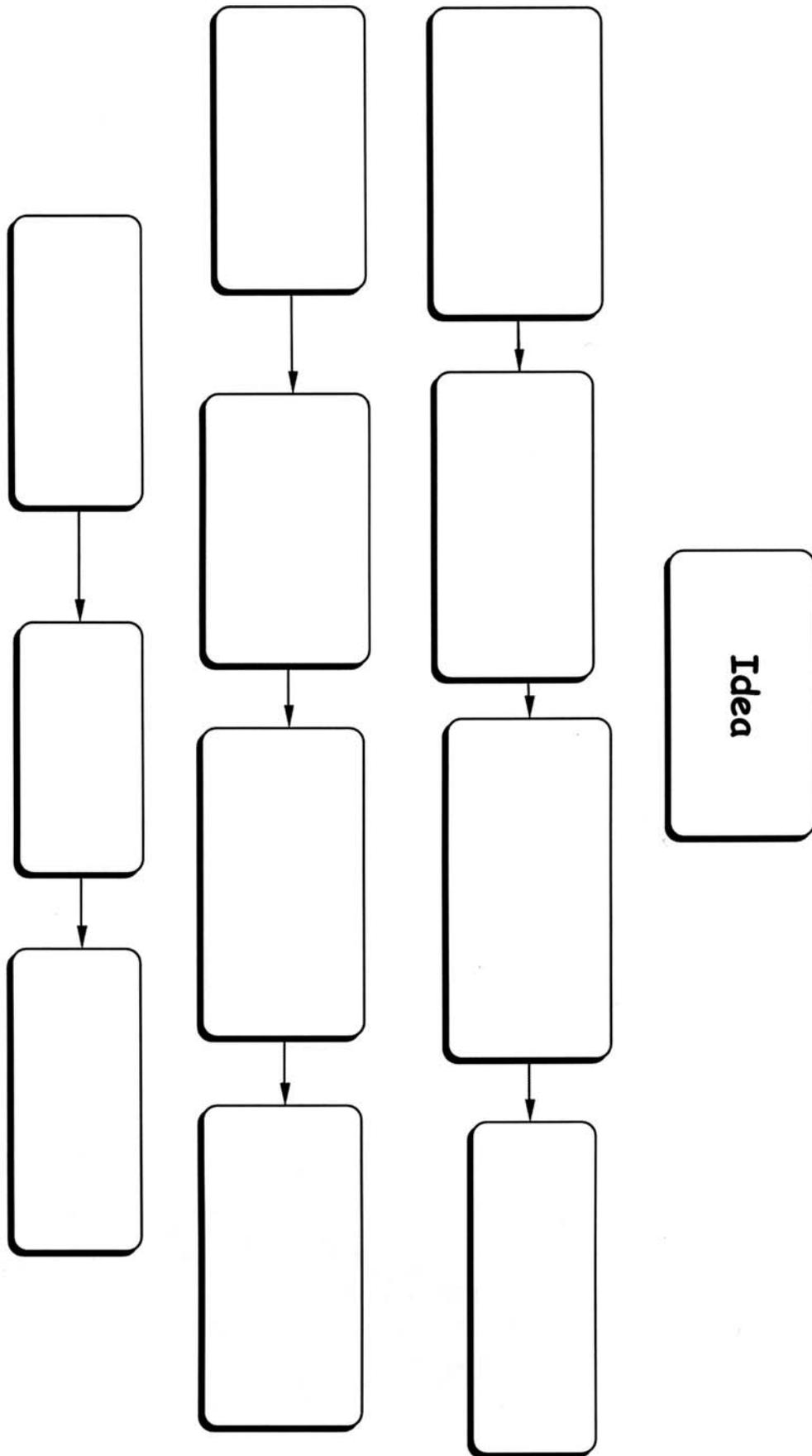
About the Author

Rosemary Wagoner

Rosemary Wagoner is in her thirteenth year of teaching with Waynesboro Public Schools. She is currently teaching at William Perry Elementary, which is a member of the Basic School Network. She has taught grades K-4, and is currently teaching third grade. Rosemary has taught in the Extended

School Year program with Waynesboro Public Schools for nine years. She has also served on the Evaluation Committee, and Budget Review Team for the Waynesboro School Board. She is active in the Waynesboro Education Association and enjoys working toward what's best for Waynesboro's children. Rosemary has served on various school committees and is currently Chair of the Technology Committee at William Perry Elementary. She has used technology with her students for the past twelve years. She also enjoys showing teachers new ways to use technology with their students. She was awarded Outstanding Young Citizen in 1992, by the Waynesboro Jaycees. Rosemary received her Bachelor's degree from Bridgewater College and is currently working on her Master's degree from George Washington University in Educational Technology Leadership.

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