

## Teacher Notes



# How a Bill Becomes a Law: The Process of Legislation

## Activity 1 Understanding the Concepts and Flow of Legislation

### Activity Overview

In this activity, students will investigate the process of legislation. At the start of the activity, all students will be given a student work sheet that contains eight critical vocabulary words or phrases that must be defined using primary sources distributed by the instructor. Once this is completed, the students are placed into groups that are subsequently given the task of creating a flow chart for prospective legislation. Each group member will become an expert on one of the vocabulary words and will play that role throughout the activity. Students will complete their charts using the information provided and then evaluate our current system by recording what works well in the system, and how the system could be improved.

## Activity at a Glance

- ◆ **Subject:** Social Studies
- ◆ **Subject Area:** Civics/Government
- ◆ **Category:** The Federal Government
- ◆ **Topic:** How a Bill Becomes a Law
- ◆ **Grade Level:** 9 - 12
- ◆ **Prerequisites:** Students should be familiar with the different branches of government and their role in our society. Students should also understand that these branches of government all share in the responsibility of creating a more fair and democratic society.
- ◆ **Total Teaching Time:** 90 minutes

## Materials

- ◆ TI-83 Plus
- ◆ TI External Keyboard
- ◆ Computers with Internet access
- ◆ TI-Navigator™ classroom network (optional)
- ◆ Resource File: **Quest**
- ◆ Student Work Sheets: **Activity Instructions, Vocabulary and Definitions, Flow Chart, Analysis Questions**

### **Tip**

This activity requires that students have access to the Internet. If this is not possible, use the Web sites named in Student Work Sheet 1, **Activity Instructions**, to print copies of the information students need to complete their research.

Students should be placed in groups of eight for this activity. Note: If groups of eight cannot be formed, then create groups of four and assign two terms to each group member.

### **Directions**

#### **Before the Activity Begins**

Make sure each student has a TI-83 Plus loaded with NoteFolio™, TlmeSpan™, and LearningCheck™ applications.

Divide the class into groups of eight students. Give each student a number, from 1 to 8 within each group.

Make enough copies of the four student work sheets so that each student can have their own copy.

#### **During the Activity**

Divide the students into their groups and assign each their number.

1. Distribute Student Work Sheet 1, **Activity Instructions**, and go over the instructions with students.
2. Distribute Student Work Sheet 2, **Vocabulary and Definitions**. Explain to students that they are not to fill the sheet in until the whole group meets to examine the terms. Each student will research, in-depth, the vocabulary word with the corresponding number that is assigned to them. While researching these terms individually, they are to keep notes in NoteFolio™.
3. Distribute Student Work Sheet 3, **Flow Chart**. Explain that once the group has discussed the different components of how a bill becomes a law, the group must collaborate on a flow chart that depicts the flow of legislation. Once the group has correctly created this flow chart, each student must use this chart to create their own TlmeSpan™ timeline file to use as a study aid.
4. Each student then decides what works well currently in the legislative process as well as how the system can be improved. The flow chart can be altered to add more boxes if the instructor wants more detail about the legislative process.

Monitor each group's progress. Circulate and assist students in their research and guide their discussions, if necessary. Make sure that students do not start on the flow chart until everyone has had the opportunity to discuss their piece of research.

During the work for Student Work Sheet 3, **Flow Chart**, remind the students that the timeline that they create from the flow chart will be used as a study aid for

the upcoming examination. Note: The groups may want to collaborate on the TlmeSpan™ file after generating their flow chart.

When the flow chart and TlmeSpan files are completed, distribute Student Work Sheet 4, **Analysis Questions**, to the students. Explain the directions and format for answering the questions (located on the work sheet). Assist students by answering any questions they might have. Note: If you have the TI-Navigator™ classroom network, use it to send the LearningCheck™ file, **Quest**, to each student. This file contains the same analysis questions that are in Student Work Sheet 4.

When the students have completed all four of the work sheets, ask for volunteers to share some of their ideas on improving the legislative process. If you have the TI-Navigator™ system, use it to collect the completed **Quest** files and then review the results with the class. If your computer is connected to an overhead projector, use it to display the results and responses for the class.

### ***After the Activity***

1. Collect Student Work Sheets 2, 3, and 4. Student Work Sheet 4 will not have to be collected in paper copy if the TI-Navigator™ classroom network is utilized.
2. Debrief students on the activity by reviewing and discussing how a bill becomes a law. Ask the students what types of changes they would make in the system. The teacher should expand the legislative process by explaining to the students that different bills originate in different houses. Furthermore, the teacher can question the students about what types of bills originate in the House and which ones originate in the Senate. Other questions the teacher might include:
  - ◆ Is it too easy for Congress to make laws?
  - ◆ Should Congress make so many laws, or should it leave more issues to the individual states?
  - ◆ What types of people lobby Congress to make laws?

## Accessing the NoteFolio™ Application on the TI-83 Plus

The following procedure enables you to access the NoteFolio™ Application. It assumes that the software is already installed on the device.

**Note:** NoteFolio™ App is most efficiently used on the TI-83 Plus with the TI Keyboard.

1. Turn on the device and press **APPS** to display the list of installed applications. Select the **NoteFolio** Application by using **▲** **▼** to scroll to it in the list.



2. Press **ENTER**. Press any key to clear the NoteFolio™ App Introduction screen. A blank (new) NoteFolio™ App file is initially displayed.

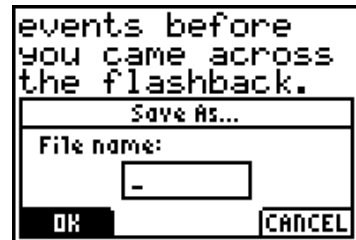


3. Students should complete the assignment.

**Note:** If you are not using a TI Keyboard, remember to press the **ALPHA** key to type letters.



4. When the file is complete, press **MENU**. Students can save the file under a new name by selecting **Save As**. The example screen shows the Save As option.



5. When the new file name is entered, press **OK** (the **Y=** key).

To exit the application, press **MENU** and select **6: Exit**.



### ***Distributing files to a class***

If you use a TI-Navigator™ system, you can use it to distribute the file to the class as follows.

1. Start the TI-Navigator™ software and then select LearningCheck™ Creator. Make sure that the students have their devices connected to the system.
2. Open the resource file. Click the Send to Class button to send the file to the student devices.

If you do not have the TI-Navigator system, you can use the standalone version of LearningCheck™ Creator to transmit the file to the students. To do this:

1. Start the LearningCheck™ Creator software. Attach one end of a TI Connectivity Cable to the computer and the other end to the TI-83 Plus device.
2. Open the resource file. Click the Send to Class button to send the file to the student's device.
3. When the transfer is completed, have the student unplug his or her device from the cable and have another student attach his or her device. Repeat Step 2.

Note: When one student has the file on his or her device, they can copy the file to another student's device using the unit-to-unit cable. If the students help with file distribution, it will speed the entire process.

A paper-based version of this file is included at the end of this activity. If you decide to use this format rather than the electronic version, make enough copies so that each student has a new form to complete after each presentation.

# ***Student Work Sheet 1***

## ***Activity Instructions***

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

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Directions:**

#### **Step 1:**

1. Each member of your group will research all of the words and phrases supplied to you on this sheet. However, each member will be responsible for thoroughly researching one of the key parts of the legislative process. The key part that you will research corresponds to the number that you were given in class. For example, if you were assigned the number 1, you will research the meaning of a bill; if you were assigned number 2, then you will research what a committee does, and so forth.
2. Using the Internet, your task is to find out how the definitional terms come together in the process of legislation. The web sites that you will visit are:  
<http://www.house.gov/pitts/government/legprocess.htm>,  
<http://www.library.unr.edu/depts/bgic/guides/government/fed/leghist.html>.  
Using NoteFolio™, you will record the meanings of the eight definitional words given, and how they interact in our government. It is important to ensure you understand how your term interacts with the other individuals in the group. Your task will be to explain the purpose of your term in the process of legislation to your group.
3. Save all your definitions under the heading of **Bills** in NoteFolio™. While the groups are discussing the assignment, the instructor will ask each student to show their work to receive credit for this part of the assignment.

#### **Step 2:**

1. After every member of your group has completed the tasks in Step 1, the group will reconvene and individually share their findings as the “expert” on their term. However, since all of the students will research the definitions, there should not be anything surprising.
2. Starting with the first term, students will share what they learned from their research. This will not be just a broad definition, but instead will focus on how it interacts with the flow of legislation. Each student will write, in their own words, the definition of the term in the chart supplied to them (Student Work Sheet 2).
3. Repeat this process until all events are explained and discussed.

**Step 3:**

1. Group members collaborate using the chart from Student Work Sheet 2 to create a flow chart of legislation (Student Work Sheet 3). The students must fill in all nine boxes of the flow chart using the information they learned from their research.
2. Once the group has successfully created a flow chart of legislation, have each member of the group create a TImeSpan™ file that outlines the process of legislation. For each step of the TImeSpan™ file, there must be a section that explains what happens at each stage. Students should use the Description feature within TImeSpan Creator to do this. This TImeSpan™ file will be utilized as a study aid for future examination.
3. Upon completion of the TImeSpan™ file, have the students answer the questions on Student Work Sheet 4. If the TI-Navigator™ classroom network and LearningCheck™ are available, then have students complete the LearningCheck™ AppVar, **Quest.edc**, instead of using Student Work Sheet 4.

## **Student Work Sheet 2**

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

### **Vocabulary and Definitions**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

This sheet is to be utilized during the group discussion. NoteFolio should be used while researching your individual terms.

<b>Terms</b>	<b>Definitions</b>
Bill	
Committee	
Subcommittee	
Amendments	
Veto	
Joint and Concurrent Resolutions	
Public Hearings	
Conference Committee	



**Student Work Sheet 3**  
**Flow Chart**

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

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

