

How a Bill Becomes a Federal Law

Based on the Annenberg Classroom Video “How a Bill Becomes a Federal Law”

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Summary

The process of how a bill becomes a federal law is more than a series of linked steps. It is the fundamental way people in a democracy get involved and work through their elected officials to meet needs and solve problems to benefit themselves and other Americans. Through this lesson, students will learn about the dynamic process of federal lawmaking and how it relates to them.

About the Video

In the video, “How a Bill Becomes a Federal Law,” Representative Pete Sessions (R) of Texas meets with a class of high school students to talk about the lawmaking process from his experience in the House of Representatives. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D) of California is interviewed and provides additional insights and information about how decisions are made. Throughout the video, both members of the 110th Congress respond to questions from the students.

The narrator describes a bridge-repair scenario that leads to a bill for the viewer/listener to follow and relate to what Congressman Sessions and Senator Feinstein have to say about the process of a bill becoming a law.

Notes and Considerations

- This lesson presumes that students have been introduced to the lawmaking process and have a basic understanding the vocabulary and concepts related to the legislative and executive branches of government.
- Understanding how a bill becomes law requires that teachers teach so students can learn both content and process knowledge. Consequently, instruction and learning takes more time. Therefore, this lesson recommends a 5-session implementation. However, suggestions are provided for reducing the number of sessions from 5 to 3 if the class has a good foundation of understanding related to the legislative process.
- Because learning is more meaningful through connections, a study of the process that a bill goes through to become law is an ideal way to help students understand the relevance of what they are learning.

Snapshot of Lesson

Grades: Middle School

Subject Focus: Civics/Government

Estimated Time: 5, 50-min. sessions; options for 3- 4 sessions

Day 1—Follow the Paper Trail

Day 2—Video & Study Questions

Day 3—Video Follow-Up Activity: One from Many

Day 4—Video Follow-Up Activity: Messages Beyond Words

Day 5—A REAL Review; Lesson Quiz

Alignment to National Standards for Civics and Government

Materials/Equipment Needed:

- Video: “How a Bill Becomes a Federal Law” (20 minutes)
- Paper and pencil
- Variety of materials to make charts and diagrams
- Computer with Internet connection and projector for class viewing

Lesson Materials Included:

- Student’s Video Study Guide with follow-up activities
- Teacher’s Video Guide with follow-up activities, notes, answers, and directions
- H.R. 3311 legislation and information
- Lesson Rubric
- Lesson Quiz

Supporting Resources Included:

- Congressional Committees
- Legislative Process
- Standards-level Alignment to National Standards for Civics and Government

TOPICS

- Constitutional authority
- Responsibilities of government
- Functions of Congress
- Legislative process
- Shared powers (Legislative and Executive Branch)
- Roles and responsibilities of American citizens
- Democratic principles and values
- Civic dispositions
- Systems thinking

NATIONAL STANDARDS

Document: *National Standards for Civics and Government* (1994) Center for Civic Education
<http://www.civiced.org/index.php?page=stds>

Grades 5-8 Organizing Questions

The national content standards for civics and government are organized under five significant questions. The following outline lists the high-level organizing questions supported by this lesson.

- I. What are civic life, politics, and government?
 - A. What is civic life? What is politics? What is government? Why are government and politics necessary? What purposes should government serve?
 - C. What are the nature and purposes of constitutions?
 - D. What are alternative ways of organizing constitutional governments?

- II. What are the foundations of the American political system?
 - A. What is the American idea of constitutional government?
 - B. What are the distinctive characteristics of American society?
 - C. What is American political culture?
 - D. What values and principles are basic to American constitutional democracy?

- III. How does the government established by the constitution embody the purposes, values, and principles of American democracy?
 - A. How are power and responsibility distributed, shared, and limited in the government established by the United States Constitution.
 - D. Who represents you in local, state, and national governments?
 - F. How does the American political system provide for choice and opportunities for participation?

- V. What are the roles of the citizen in American democracy?
 - B. What are the rights of citizens?
 - C. What are the responsibilities of citizens?
 - D. What dispositions or traits of character are important to the preservation and improvement of American constitutional democracy?
 - E. How can citizens take part in civic life?

Note: A more detailed standards-level alignment related to these questions can be found in the Supporting Resources section of this lesson plan.

OUTCOMES

Knowledge, skills, and dispositions

Students will . . .

1. Identify and explain the sequential steps in the federal lawmaking process.
2. Identify and explain the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that ordinary citizens and government officials need for the legislative process to work.
3. Recognize democratic values and principles in the lawmaking process.
4. Identify impediments to effective lawmaking.
5. Determine the importance of negotiation and compromise for arriving at consensus.
6. Explain how the quality of life in the U.S. is ultimately the responsibility of the people through the kinds of laws that are made and passed.
7. Draw conclusions about the importance of student/citizen participation in the lawmaking process and identify how one can get involved.
8. Identify how lawmakers, political parties, and interest groups influence legislation.
9. Gain appreciation for complexities of the lawmaking process and the power it has to turn ideas into laws that can make life better for Americans.

Integrated Skills

1. Information literacy skills

Students will . . .

- Gather, organize, and present information.
- Analyze primary sources.
- Use technology as a tool to support learning.

2. Media literacy skills

Students will . . .

- Gain explicit and implicit information through viewing and listening.
- Interpret both verbal and nonverbal behavior.

3. Communication & Collaboration skills

Students will . . .

- Write and speak clearly to contribute ideas, information, and express own point of view.
- Write in response to questions.
- Collaborate to produce a final project.
- Negotiate and compromise to form consensus.
- Respect diverse opinions.
- Assume shared responsibility for collaborative work.
- Resolve differences peacefully and productively.

4. Study skills

Students will . . .

- Use organizational strategies.
- Take notes.
- Manage time and materials.

5. Thinking skills

Students will . . .

- Describe and recall information.
- Explain ideas or concepts.
- Apply concepts and principles.
- Analyze and compare to discover relationships.
- Synthesize information to create.
- Evaluate and judge courses of action.
- Use systems thinking.

6. Problem-solving skills

Students will . . .

- Use sound reasoning in understanding.
- Ask meaningful questions.
- Explain the interconnections within the process that are needed to achieve a goal.

7. Participation skills

Students will . . .

- Contribute to small and large group discussion.
- Work responsibly both individually and with diverse people.
- Contribute to group decisionmaking.
- Express own beliefs, feelings, and convictions.
- Show initiative and self-direction.

ASSESSMENT

Evidence of achievement may be gathered from student performance related to the following:

1. Individual Work
 - Viewing and Listening
 - Study Guide and Challenge Questions
 - Diagram
 - Opinion Essay
2. Group Work (Follow-up Activities)
 - One from Many
 - Messages Beyond Words
3. Lesson Quiz

VOCABULARY (see glossary included with this lesson)

- 110th Congress
- American Dream
- appropriation bill
- authorization bill
- “big guns”
- bill
- checks and balances
- civic life
- cloture
- committee
- committee process
- compromise
- Congress
- Congressman
- consensus
- Constitution
- debate
- “deliberative body”
- Democrat
- enact
- expert witnesses
- federal law
- filibuster
- germane
- “go to the wall”
- hopper
- House of Representatives
- idea
- “ideas body”
- jurisdiction
- law
- “legislative work”
- lobbyist
- majority Leader
- majority rule
- majority Whip
- minority leader
- minority whip
- Parliamentarian
- party
- party whip
- politics
- process
- referred
- regular order
- Representative
- Republican
- Rules Committee
- “selling your bill”
- Senate
- Senator
- shared powers
- signature
- Speaker of the House
- Standing Committee
- testimony
- Transportation & Infrastructure Committee
- unanimous consent
- veto
- veto override
- vote

Resources for Definitions

Annenberg Classroom Glossary

<http://www.annenbergclassroom.org/terms>

FactCheckED—Dictionary

<http://factchecked.org/factchecked-dictionary/>

Senate Glossary

http://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/reference/b_three_sections_with_teasers/glossary.htm

LESSON OVERVIEW

Day 1: Follow the Paper Trail

Students are prepared for the lesson and video, “How a Bill Becomes a Federal Law,” through review of basic vocabulary and information about the legislative process. They participate in the construction of a giant paper trail on the board that shows one path a bill can take to become a law, then follow the paper trail as a review. The class relates the paper trail to the way processes work through the interconnection and interaction of many parts to reach a goal. Study groups are formed for the duration of the lesson.

Day 2: Video “How a Bill Becomes a Federal Law”

Students view the video, work through the Video Study Guide, and begin Follow-Up Activity #1: One from Many by drafting their individual process diagrams for the bridge bill in the video, which they complete for homework.

Day 3: Video Follow-Up Activity #1: One from Many

Each study group collaborates to develop a single process model from the multiple ideas contributed by each member that describes the pathway for the bridge bill in the video.

Day 4: Video Follow-Up Activity #2: Messages Beyond Words

The study groups view the video once again to notice the important verbal and non-verbal messages conveyed and complete the Follow-Up Activity #2: Messages Beyond Words. After a class discussion, students begin writing their opinion essays.

Day 5: A REAL Review; Lesson Quiz

Through a teacher-led discussion, students review and discuss the lawmaking process by examining the pathway of actual legislation (H.R. 3311) introduced in the House after the collapse of the interstate I-35 bridge located in Minneapolis, Minnesota on August 1, 2007. Comparisons will be made to the path for the fictitious bridge repair bill tracked in the video. After discussion, students take the Lesson Quiz.

Implementation Options (3 or 4 days)

Depending on the availability of time, and the knowledge level of the class, this lesson can be adjusted from 5 sessions to 3 in the following ways:

- Skip Day 1 for a class with a good understanding of the legislative process and have a brief review on the day of the video.
- Eliminate Day 3 by substituting the study group part in Follow-Up Activity #1 with an individual homework project to design a concept map for the bridge bill scenario. The same rubric could apply.

Materials and Equipment for this Lesson

Materials and Equipment Needed

- 20-minute video: “How a Bill Becomes a Federal Law” available from Annenbergclassroom.org
- Paper and pencil
- Variety of materials to make charts and diagrams
- Computer with Internet access
- Projector for class viewing

Lesson Materials Included

- Student’s Video Study Guide (includes follow-up activities with worksheets)
- Teacher’s Video Guide (with additional notes, answers, and directions)
- H.R. 3311 legislation
 - H.R. 3311 IH
 - H.R. 3311 EAS
 - H.R. 3311 as Public Law 110-56
- Lesson Rubric
- Lesson Quiz

Supporting Resources Included

- Congressional Committees
- The Legislative Process
- Standards-Level Alignment to National Standards for Civics and Government

Student's Video Study Guide for "How a Bill Becomes a Federal Law"

Video Overview

In the video, "How a Bill Becomes a Federal Law," Representative Pete Sessions (R) of Texas meets with a class of high school students to talk about the process a bill must go through to become a law. Senator Dianne (D) of California is interviewed and provides additional insights and information about how decisions are made. Throughout the video, both members of the 110th Congress respond to questions from the students.

Contents	
Video Overview.....	Page 1
Study Tips.....	Page 1
Challenge Questions.....	Page 1
Words and Phrases.....	Page 2
Study Questions.....	Page 2
Follow-up Activities.....	Page 8
-- One from Many	
-- Messages Beyond Words	

The narrator presents a bridge-repair scenario for the viewer/listener to use and relate to what Congressman Sessions and Senator Feinstein have to say about the process of a bill becoming a law.

Note: The video describes information about committees and leadership in the House of Representatives and the Senate for the 110th Congress during the Bush Administration.

Study Tips

There is a lot of information packed into this video and speeding through it is not a good strategy for learning. Because it's much easier to process lots of information by breaking it into smaller chunks, the guide divides the video into 10 parts.

1. Work through the video carefully the first time it is shown by following this guide.
2. Watch and listen carefully.
3. Use your listening and observation skills to discover verbal and non-verbal messages about what's needed to make the process work.
 - personal attitudes, behaviors, knowledge, and skills
 - civic dispositions
 - democratic values and principles
4. Take good notes so you can use them later.
5. Participate in discussion.
6. Pause at the time indicators to reflect and answer the questions.
7. Revisit sections as needed to review by rewinding to the start times.
8. Ask questions.
9. Watch the video another time without any stops to gain appreciation for the flow of the story and notice things you may not have noticed before.

Challenge Questions

1. Where along the process of the bridge bill becoming a law, could it be changed?
2. Where along the process of the bridge bill becoming a law did it absolutely not get changed? Cite details to support your answer.
3. What was required for the bridge bill to keep moving along and end up as a law?
4. Of the two kinds of bills defined in the video, which kind of bill was the bridge bill? In which House did it originate? Provide details to support your answer.

Student's Video Study Guide for "How a Bill Becomes a Federal Law"

5. Reflect on Rep. Sessions final statement: "The American Dream will be alive and well as long as you continue to not only understand what we stand for, but how to make these ideas become present in our lives to make our country better." What is the "American Dream" and your role in helping it stay alive and well?

Words and Phrases

- | | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| • 110 th Congress | • filibuster | • referred |
| • American Dream | • germane | • regular order |
| • appropriation bill | • "go to the wall" | • Representative |
| • authorization bill | • hopper | • Republican |
| • "big guns" | • House of Representatives | • Rules Committee |
| • bill | • idea | • "selling your bill" |
| • checks and balances | • "ideas body" | • Senate |
| • civic life | • jurisdiction | • Senator |
| • cloture | • law | • shared powers |
| • committee | • "legislative work" | • signature |
| • committee process | • lobbyist | • Speaker of the House |
| • compromise | • majority Leader | • Standing Committee |
| • Congress | • majority rule | • testimony |
| • Congressman | • majority Whip | • Transportation & Infrastructure Committee |
| • consensus | • minority leader | • unanimous consent |
| • Constitution | • minority whip | • veto |
| • debate | • Parliamentarian | • veto override |
| • "deliberative body" | • party | • vote |
| • Democrat | • party whip | |
| • enact | • politics | |
| • expert witnesses | • process | |
| • federal law | | |

Study Questions

Directions: This guide divides the video into the following 10 parts and provides questions for each part to help you gather important information. Even if you know the answers to the questions, write something down because the process of writing will help you remember.

Part 1: Learn background information about Congress.

Part 2: Learn about the beginning steps for a bill to become a law.

Part 3: Learn more about what happens in committees.

Part 4: Learn about the role of negotiation and compromise.

Part 5: Learn about the leadership in the House of Representatives.

Part 6: Learn about other options for helping a bill become a law.

Part 7: Learn about consensus, decision-making, and the influence of others.

Part 8: Learn about the committee process in the Senate, information about the Senate, and how the Senate process differs from that in the House.

Part 9: Learn about President's power in the lawmaking process.

Part 10: Reflect on the value of the process and its importance for everyone.

Student's Video Study Guide for "How a Bill Becomes a Federal Law"

Part 1: Learn background information about Congress.

Start at the Beginning

1. What is the primary responsibility of Congress?
2. What document gives Congress its powers?
3. What are the two houses of Congress?
4. Who can write a bill?
5. Who can have an idea for a bill?
6. Where do bills begin?
7. What is the process like?
8. Who is Pete Sessions?
9. What does Pete Sessions mean when he says, "We are an ideas body and we like to make ideas better."?

Pause at 01:04 Answer/discuss the above questions. Continue when done.

Part 2: Learn about the beginning steps for a bill to become a law.

Start at 01:04

1. How does the process begin?
2. Describe the scenario used for the idea in this video.
3. How does an idea get considered by Congress?
4. Who can write a bill?
5. What is a hopper?
6. What happens to a bill before it is dropped in the hopper?
7. What happens to all the bills collected in the hopper?
8. What happens in Committee that makes it hard for a bill to survive?

Pause at 02:13 Answer/discuss the above questions. Continue when done.

Part 3: Learn more about what happens in committees.

Start at 02:13

Student question for Rep. Sessions: "Could you explain what happens in the committee process?"

1. How many Standing Committees are there in the House of Representatives?
2. Name the Standing Committee to which the bridge repair bill was referred and tell why it ended up there?
3. Define jurisdiction.
4. What does it mean to begin "selling your bill" and how does it help?

Student's Video Study Guide for "How a Bill Becomes a Federal Law"

5. Authorization bills deal with _____.
6. Appropriation bills deal with _____.
7. While most bills can originate in the House or the Senate, which bills can only originate in the House?

Pause at 03:28 Answer/discuss the above questions. Continue when done.

Part 4: Learn about the role of negotiation and compromise.

Start at 03:28

Student question for Rep. Sessions: "How much do lawmakers have to negotiate and compromise to pass a bill?"

1. How does negotiation and compromise make a bill better?
2. How does a bill get out of Committee and move to the next step?
3. Where does a bill go after it passes the Committee?
4. What does the Rules Committee do?
5. How many Representatives sit on the House Rules Committee? _____
How many are from the majority party? _____
How many are from the minority party? _____

Pause at 05:59 Answer/discuss the above questions. Continue when done.

Part 5: Learn about the leadership in the House of Representatives.

Start at 05:59

Student question for Rep. Sessions: "What are the responsibilities of the leaders of the House? More specifically, what power does the Speaker exert over legislation? And what is the role of the party whip?"

1. How often is a new Congress convened?
2. The current Congress is the 110th Congress. Name the majority party in the House of Representatives. _____ Democrat
3. How many members (House seats) are in the House of Representatives?
4. Who is the Speaker of the House in the 110th Congress?
How is the Speaker selected?
How does the Speaker influence legislation?
5. What is the majority whip's responsibility?
6. What is the minority whip's responsibility?
7. Why is it important for the House to debate a bill before a vote?
8. What happens in the full House of Representatives that makes it hard for a bill to survive?

Student's Video Study Guide for "How a Bill Becomes a Federal Law"

9. How does a bill make it out of the House?
10. Where does a bill go after leaving the House?

Pause at 08:18 Answer/discuss the above questions. Continue when done.

Part 6: Learn about other options for helping a bill become a law.

Start at 08:18

Student question for Rep. Sessions: "When a bill is voted down by a committee, what happens to it? Can it be brought back up again? When a bill is voted down by the full House of Representatives, what happens to it and can it be brought back up again?"

1. If a bill is having a hard time making it through the process what other ways can be tried to help it become a law?
2. Define germane.
3. After making it through the House, the bill heads for the Senate. Where does it end up in the Senate?

Pause at 09:37 Answer/discuss the above questions. Continue when done.

Part 7: Learn about consensus, decision-making, and the influence of others.

Start at 09:37

1. What is the meaning of consensus?
2. Why is consensus difficult?
3. When Senator Feinstein was asked how she handles important issues with other members of Congress, she responded by saying, "The key, I've always said, is knowing when to go to the wall and when to make a compromise. You can't go to the wall all of the time . . ." Explain what her statement means.
4. How does one decide when to "go to the wall?"

Student question for Senator Feinstein: "Have you ever had any personal conflicts while you're passing a law?"

5. What did you learn about decision-making from Senator Feinstein?
6. What did Senator Feinstein mean when she said she's a "little bit independent."

Student question for Senator Feinstein: "What is the impact of lobbyists when deciding controversial issues such as gun control?"

7. What did you learn about lobbyists from Senator Feinstein?
8. What did Senator Feinstein mean when she talked about "big guns."
9. Who are the "big guns" related to gun control in this country?

Pause at 12:10 Answer/discuss the above questions. Continue when done.

Student's Video Study Guide for "How a Bill Becomes a Federal Law"

Part 8: Learn about the committee process in the Senate, information about the Senate, and how the Senate process differs from that in the House.

Start at 12:10

1. How is the committee process in the Senate like that in the House?
2. How many Senators are there in the Senate?

Student question for Rep. Sessions: "How does the Senate's dealing with legislation contrast with that of the House?"

3. How is the Senate process different from than in the House?
4. Define "regular order."
5. Define "unanimous consent."
6. Tell about filibuster and cloture and why they are used in the Senate?
7. How does a bill get out of the Senate and where does it go next?

Pause at 14:45 Answer/discuss the above questions. Continue when done.

Part 9: Learn about President's power in the lawmaking process.

Start at 14:45

1. What does the President do to turn a bill into a law?
2. What happens to a bill that is approved by the House and Senate but the President doesn't like it?

Student question for Rep. Sessions: "If the President vetoes legislation that was initiated by the House, what are the steps a bill would be put through if the House wanted to try to override the bill veto?"

3. What is a veto override and how does it work?

Student question for Sen. Feinstein: "If the President was part of a different party is it harder to pass laws?"

4. Which party is in control of the House?
5. Which party is in control of the Senate?
6. To which party does President Bush belong?
7. Explain why it's harder to pass laws if the President is from the minority party.
8. What are the 3 options that Congress has for a bill that the President vetoed?
9. How many votes does it take to override a veto?

Pause at 17:07 Answer/discuss the above questions. Continue when done.

Part 10: Reflect on the value of the process and its importance for everyone.

Student's Video Study Guide for "How a Bill Becomes a Federal Law"

Start at 17:07

Student question for Rep. Sessions: "Congress has been criticized for moving slowly in developing legislation. Do you think the process needs to get sped up?"

1. What do you think? Discuss with others and support your reasons.
Before you respond
 - Reflect on Rep. Sessions comment at the beginning of the video when he said, "We are an ideas body and we like to make ideas better."
 - Consider Sen. Feinstein's comment at the end of the video. "It's called a deliberative body. In a sense that means a slow moving body. It's based, I believe, on the fact that no legislation is better than bad legislation."
 - Consider the three reasons given for why this process is important for everyone:
 - Determines the policies that govern our lives
 - Where government spends our money
 - How government meets our needs
2. Why is it important for YOU to know about the process of how a bill becomes a law?

Stop at the End Answer/discuss the above questions.

Revisit Challenge Questions

You teacher will pass back the responses that you gave to the Challenge Questions before watching the video.

Student Directions

1. Self-assess. Review what you wrote, cross out errors (don't erase), then write in the corrections.
2. Make additional corrections if needed after answers are discussed in class.
3. Reflect and identify specific reasons you did better the second time around.
4. Write your reasons on the back of the paper.

Student's Video Study Guide for "How a Bill Becomes a Federal Law"

Follow-up Activities

Follow-Up Activity #1: One from Many

Overview

Students work individually to draft a diagram for the path of the bridge bill in the video then collaborate in a small group to produce a single model.

Purpose

To experience the struggles of decision-making that lawmakers go through to produce one agreement from many ideas, students work to reach consensus from diverse ideas to produce a single diagram, model, or graphic organizer that identifies, describes, and sequences the steps involved in the bridge bill scenario presented in the video. The final product should match the process described in the video.

Materials Needed

- Lesson Rubric
- Student's Video Study Guide
- Video: "How a Bill Becomes a Federal Law"
- Paper, pencil, Post-It notes, markers, poster paper, etc.
- Computer and appropriate software (optional)

Student Directions

1. Homework: Develop a sketch for a graphic organizer that represents the path of the bridge bill in the video. Use the Study Guide and video as needed. The draft you bring to class should be a sequential representation of how the bridge bill became a law and include a brief description and explanation for each step.
2. Work in your study group to reach consensus by pooling the ideas in your drafts to produce a single diagram, model, or graphic organizer that identifies, describes, and sequences the steps involved in the bridge bill scenario presented in the video. Be creative and use a variety of materials.
3. As a group present and explain the model of agreement to the rest of the class.
4. Be prepared to reflect on the group interaction just experienced and share a little about what was easy, what was hard, and how problems were resolved.
5. Be prepared to discuss, imagine, and "think out loud" about what it takes to get 1 agreement from 585 people.(435 Representatives, 100 Senators, 1 President). Consider the importance of process, rules and procedures, time involved, fairness, etc.

Student's Video Study Guide for "How a Bill Becomes a Federal Law"

Follow-Up Activity #2: Messages Beyond Words

Overview

Students view the video without any stops then use critical and analytical viewing and listening skills to draw conclusions about the not-explicitly-stated knowledge, skills, values, principles, attitudes, and behaviors needed for the lawmaking process work. After small group work and class discussion, students will write an opinion essay.

Purpose

Focus on the roles and responsibilities of American citizens necessary for effective lawmaking by gathering information that was not explicitly discussed in the video but could be gained through inference, analysis, and interpretation of verbal and non-verbal behavior.

Materials Needed

- Follow-Up Activity #2: Messages Beyond Words
- Video: "How a Bill Becomes a Federal Law"
- Student's Video Study Guide
- Pencil/paper and/or word processing program
- Lesson Rubric

Student Directions

1. Using Follow-Activity #2: Messages Beyond Words, work in your study group to identify the many factors necessary for making the lawmaking process work by gathering information that was not explicitly discussed in the video but could be gained through inference, analysis, and interpretation of verbal and non-verbal behavior.

2. **Homework:** Write an Opinion Essay

Reflect on the activity Messages Beyond Words, then write a 5-paragraph opinion essay that supports one "behind the scenes" factor that you feel is critical for making the lawmaking process work and explain why.

- Paragraph 1: Introductory paragraph
- Paragraph 2: First supporting detail
- Paragraph 3: Second supporting detail
- Paragraph 4: Third supporting detail
- Paragraph 5: Summary paragraph

Student's Video Study Guide for "How a Bill Becomes a Federal Law"

Follow-Up Activity #2: Messages Beyond Words

How well the lawmaking process works depends on a lot of "behind the scenes" factors that were not explicitly discussed in the video, but could be inferred from the way the words were delivered, the attitudes and actions of the speakers, and the images used.

1. In your study group, discuss the verbal and nonverbal messages that came through in the video related to each of the items in the chart. Check the ones you can substantiate and be prepared to share during the class discussion that follows.

(✓)	Knowledge
	Understands how the lawmaking process works.
	Informed about public issues.
	Knows responsibilities of leadership.
	Knows what government can and cannot do.
(✓)	Skills
	Gathers information and facts
	Communicates knowledge to others.
	Joins political parties, interest groups, and other organizations to influence decisions.
	Attends meetings of governing bodies.
	Votes responsibly.
	Works cooperatively with others.
	Participates in public service.
	Speaks and write persuasively.
(✓)	Traits of character, attitudes, and behavior. (Dispositions)
	<i>civility</i> —willingness to listen to and respect different points of view; avoiding hostile, abusive, emotional, and illogical argument
	<i>courage</i> —strength to stand up for one's convictions when conscience demands
	<i>respect for the rights of individuals</i> —respect for others' right to an equal voice in government, to hold and advocate diverse ideas
	<i>respect for law</i> —willingness to abide by laws; willingness to work through peaceful, legal means to change laws.
	<i>honesty</i> —willingness to seek and express the truth
	<i>open mindedness</i> —considering others' points of view
	<i>critical mindedness</i> —question the validity of various positions, including one's own
	<i>negotiation and compromise</i> —reaching agreement with those of differing views
	<i>persistence</i> —willingness to try again and again to accomplish worthwhile goals
	<i>civic mindedness</i> —paying attention to and having concern for public affairs
	<i>compassion</i> —concern for the well-being of others, especially for the less fortunate
	<i>patriotism</i> —loyal to the values and principles of American constitutional democracy
(✓)	Values and principles of American constitutional democracy
	Respect for the Constitution.
	The importance of "the loyal opposition" in a constitutional democracy.
	Government responsibility to carry out the mandates of the people.
	Government responsibility to work for our benefit.
	Both men and women can serve in public office.

2. List other important knowledge, traits, attitudes, and actions that you noticed and feel are important that are not on the chart—the rights, roles, and responsibilities of citizens in an American democracy.