There Oughta Be a Law - Simulation

Overview: Since the early 1600's, the United States has been the new land to people from all over the world. These immigrants came to the United States for various reasons, some for wealth, some to escape persecution, and some for adventure. All of these people came to the United States with many hopes, dreams, and visions that eventually led up to the forming of a new country, and in 1788 a new government. In the 1800's a great migration of people flooded the United States bringing with them their different cultures and value systems. These immigrants came to the United States to participate in a unique form of government. Not a government of kings and queens, but a government in which they could enter into and play a major role in. The people of the United States participate in a government for the people, by the people, and of the people that assures us of certain rights and privileges.

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to provide an activity that will encourage students to understand how our government makes a law. As well as encouraging the students to develop an increased awareness of the issues affecting their lives and how they can provide input into the American political process.

Objectives:

1. Identify the steps by which a bill becomes a federal law in the United States.

2. Be able to identify at least two issues affecting America today and explain the basic problems and conflicts that make up these issues.

Key Terms:

Bill: A draft of a law presented to a legislature for enactment

Committee: A body of persons delegated to consider, investigate, take action on, or report on a matter.

Debate: A regulated discussion of a proposition between two or more sides.

Law: A rule of conduct or action prescribed or formally recognized as binding or enforced by a controlling authority.

Override: To set aside or overturn.

Veto: A power vested to a chief executive (president) to prevent permanently or temporarily the enactment of a measure passed by a legislature.

Parliamentary Procedure:
Activities:

1. Using the key terms briefly explain to the students the steps through which a bill becomes a law in the United States Congress. Provide the students with a worksheet that shows this process.

   Discuss some of the difficulties that are faced in the process. Is it easy to have a bill become a law? What are some of the ways students and their parents can influence what is going on in government?

2. As a class go through a recent copy of a local newspaper discuss some of the current issues facing the nation and how the government is addressing these issues. What are some ways that these issues should be dealt with? Should the federal government address the problem?

3. Pick one issue that the class has focused on and have them discuss ways in which they would want to see this issue addressed. Have them follow the basic outline that was handed out on how a bill becomes a law. The students will have to discuss and debate their ideas and come up with a plan a majority will agree with. The students will fill out the Debate and Bill Proposal Worksheet as the debate proceeds. They will have to vote as a class to finalize this proposal. Once a majority of students can agree to a plan the Bill will be sent to the “President”. There should also be a “Speaker of the House” to act as the presiding officer to enforce the parliamentary rules.

4. Have the students elect one student to act as the President. As the President, the student can either "sign the bill into law" or veto the bill. The class will then have the authority to override this veto with a two-thirds majority.

5. There will then be a group of students who will act as the Supreme Court, and they will check the bill against the Constitution and Bill of Rights for the law’s constitutionality.

To discuss: How easy was it to get the other students to understand your ideas? What were some of the difficulties you faced?
President
Supreme Court
Speaker of the House
Congress
Parliamentary Procedure

Rotate speakers who Oppose / Support

Chair – The chairman or presiding officer (Speaker of the House, President of the Senate)

Floor - The right to speak; by obtaining the floor

Recognize - The act of the chairman which permits a member to speak. Ordinarily the chair nods to the member when he rises, or calls, him be name as a sign that he is given the floor.

Obtain the floor – This action consists of the member standing, addressing the chairman (“Mr. Chairman” or “Madame Speaker”), and being recognized by the chair. In some groups you obtain the floor by raising your hand and being recognized by the chair.

Minutes – The record, kept by the secretary

Motion – a proposal for action by the assembly – “Move to amend.” Or “Move to substitute.” “I move that we . . . .”

Second – the support given a motion by a second person in the group – “I second the motion.

Order of Business – the sequence of procedure in the meeting.

Not in order or Out of order – incorrect according to rules of procedure.

Majority – one more than half of all of the votes cast.

Plurality – the highest number of votes cast

Debate – discussion or remarks upon a motion

State – state or repeat the motion

Put – restate the motion so that it can be voted upon.

Adjourn – conclude and close the meeting

Convene – Assemble and start the meeting.

Call to Order – The chairman state “The meeting will please come to order.”

Quorum – the number of members present necessary to conduct business.
Minutes Worksheet

Bill # _________ Title: _______________________________________________________

Original Bill:

Amendments:

Substitutions:

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<th>Opposition</th>
<th>Support</th>
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Final Bill: Vote _________

Conclusion: (Veto or Pass? Constitutional?) Explain