



Michigan Youth in Government

How to Write a Bill

What is a Youth in Government bill?

A bill is an idea for a new law, and is written by students (delegates). The bill will be printed in a bill book. Every delegate will receive a bill book. Bills will be discussed in committees formed of delegates at the Lansing conference. If the committee thinks that the bill would make a good law, they will send it to the legislature where it could become a law. All bills must be state issues only.

Step 1- Develop an Idea for a Bill

Ideas for state laws come from citizens who have ideas on how to improve their lives. There are many laws already in existence in Michigan, but these laws can be amended for further improvement. Your idea for a bill must be for either a law that **does not yet exist**, or will be an amendment to an existing law. This means that you will need to do some **RESEARCH**. In the box below, write down your ideas for a law, which would improve the lives of the citizens of Michigan. Some topics for ideas are:

1. Education
2. Green Technology
3. Public Health and Safety
4. Crime
5. Pollution
6. Racial Problems
7. Internet censorship
8. Civil Rights
9. Michigan Great Lakes
10. Unemployment

With your partner, brainstorm some topics that are important to you:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Still having trouble coming up with an idea? Ask yourself these questions:

1. What conditions exist in your school that make it difficult for you to get the best education?
2. What conditions exist in your city that makes it difficult for you to feel safe?
3. Are there enough employment opportunities for your family?
4. Does your family have health care?
5. Do you agree with the current laws for hunting?
6. Does your city have enough opportunities for recreation?

Write your idea for a bill: _____

RESEARCH – A law may already exist for your idea, but it could be improved. How can you find out?

1. Go to **www.legislature.mi.gov** and type in a keyword. The site will do a search for you.
2. Talk with your advisor and principal.
3. Talk to your city council representative.
4. Call your senator or representative's office.

Step 2 – Draft the Bill

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Writing Your Bill

Bills are to be written by students only. You and your partner should work as team, so that each of you contributes about the same amount of work. Listen to each other's ideas and cooperate in the writing process. Your advisor, teachers, principal, parents, and elected officials can offer helpful suggestions that will help you prepare your bill. Remember, your bill must be a Michigan state issue. Bills must be researched, and no longer than one typewritten page.

The bill must include:

1. Title
2. Enacting Clause
3. Body of the Bill

Title: The first part of the bill is the title. The Michigan Constitution provides that "No bill shall embrace more than one subject, which shall be expressed in its title." Write the title below. The title does not need to be detailed, but it needs to clearly present the idea. Begin with, "A bill to..."

A bill to _____

Enacting Clause: Under our constitution the body of a bill begins, "The People of the State of Michigan Enact". Nothing else is needed here.

Body of the Bill: The body of the bill specifies how the bill will fulfill the requirements you wrote in your title. These specifications are separated into **sections**. A good bill should have enough information to need at least 5 sections. Each section is a sentence or short paragraph with complete thoughts. Say what you want to say in as few words as possible. See the sample bill attached for an example of how to write your sections.

Your sections need to include:

- Definitions of the terms of the bill
- How the bill will be funded
- Who will enforce the bill
- A penalty for not following the new law
- An effective date

Definitions: Define specifically who or what this bill is about.

Funding: Where will the money come from to fund your idea?

Enforcement: Who will make sure everyone follows the new law?

Penalty: A bill must specify a penalty for non-compliance. The penalty could be a fine, loss of a privilege, mandatory community service, jail time, etc. The penalty should match the severity of the crime.

Effective Date: A bill must specify a time when the bill will be come effective. Consider how long it will realistically take to follow all the specifications you have outlined.

Now you are ready to draft your bill. Below is a bill template. Write your draft in the spaces provided. Use only the number of sections you need. Additional sections can be added if necessary.

School:

Introduced by:

A bill to:

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF MICHIGAN ENACT:

Section 1.

Section 2.

Section 3.

Section 4.

Section 5.

Section 6.

Use another sheet of paper if you need more room. Congratulations! You've completed the first draft of your bill! The first draft is the hardest part.

Step 3 – Submit Your Bill Online

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Now you are ready to write your bill on the computer using the online template. Before you type your final copy you must check the following:

Spelling – Proofread for spelling mistakes. Ask another delegate and/or your advisor to proofread as well.

Grammar – Proofread for grammar mistakes. Write in complete sentences. Use capital letters for proper nouns. Use the correct punctuation. A sloppy bill will reflect poorly on the authors.

Bills that will not be accepted

- Bills not in correct form
- Bills not of state issues
- Bills not submitted by the deadline
- Bills that insult any part of the population

1. Type your bill as a document with sections, do not skip spaces.
2. Save your document.
3. Go online to www.ygtech.org/bills/mi (your advisor will give you the password). Choose either middle school or high school depending on your grade.
4. Follow the directions on the website to submit your bill.
5. When you have successfully submitted your bill, **print and save the page with your login number.**

Your work as an author is done, but your work as a delegate is just beginning. We'll see you at the Lansing Conference where your bill will first be read aloud by you, discussed in committee, discussed in the Legislature, and perhaps even passed.

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Sample Bill

Bill No. S0102

Referred to the committee on:

School:

Introduced by:

A bill to mandate that all public schools (K-12) in the state of Michigan have at least one school nurse.

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF MICHIGAN ENACT:

Section 1: This bill shall be funded by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. On count day, additional funds will be given to the school that will cover the expenses of any medicines, equipment, etc. The district's school board will be responsible for providing payroll.

Section 2: The school nurse will have to update their certification cards before the expiration date (CPR, First-Aid, etc.)

Section 3: A parental consent form should be sent home September of every school year in order for the nurse to prescribe medications to each pupil.

Section 4: After the passage of this law, the state will send inspectors to schools to each district for enforcement. Inspections take place in the middle of each semester (mid-November and mid-April each school year).

Section 5: If the school fails to pass the first inspection, 10% of their count day earnings will be taken. After failing to pass the second, an additional fine of \$5,000 will be charged.

Section 6: The Michigan Department of Education will be responsible for the enforcement of this law

Section 7: This bill will go into effect by September 1 of the 2011-2012 school year.