

# YLA YOUTH IN GOVERNMENT

## Legislator Manual



### *Preparing the Next Generation of Civic Leaders*

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If you have additional questions after reviewing this manual, please contact us.

We are here to help you!

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## Your Responsibilities as a Youth Legislator

Youth Legislators serve as Senators or members of the House. Responsibilities include:

1. With a partner, write and submit one (1) Bill to improve the state.
2. Meet ALL deadlines.
3. Be aware and informed of and able to use YG legislative rules and procedures.
4. Participate in all parts of the program on an intellectual and productive level.
5. Adhere to the Code of Conduct.

## What is a Youth In Government Bill?

- A Bill is an idea for a new law or to repeal an existing law on state issues only using the required special format so it fits with existing laws.
- A Bill is written by students.
- The most important part of writing a Legislative Bill is to choose a topic that is personally meaningful. Personal commitment to a bill influences the overall student legislative experience.
- Begin early. Talk with people about your ideas and spend time determining what the legislation will accomplish.
- After the bill is written, continue research and prepare information for debate at YG.

## What Happens Next?

- Submit your bill to the YLA office before or on the deadline date.
- Your bill will be rated at the Bill/Case Rating in February. It will be rated by student legislative leaders, officer candidates, and committee chairs. It will be given a score based on the provisions in the YLA rating sheet.
- Bills will then be assigned a number, based on their rating, for the order of presentation at YG.
- The bills will be printed in the Youth in Government Bill Book. Everyone will receive a book and it will also be available on our website.
- At YG, you will present your bill to the Committee it is assigned to at the time it is assigned. Committee members may ask you questions concerning the content. If the Committee believes that the Bill would make a good law, they will send it to the Legislature where you will present your Bill again to the complete Chamber.
- If your bill is passed on the Chamber Floor, it will be sent to the Youth Governor for consideration of passage.

# Determining and Developing a Bill Topic

1. Determine the Bill topic. Ideas for state laws come from citizens who have ideas on how to improve their lives. Existing laws may be amended for improvement or repealed. 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 or will be repealed. Ask others what they believe our state needs, watch the news, and read the newspapers.
2. A law may already exist for your bill idea, but it can be improved. How do you find out?
  - Go online.
  - Talk to your Advisor and Principal.
  - Talk to your city counsel or county commission representative.
  - Call your Senate or House official.
3. Compare notes with others in the delegation. Within the delegation, be sure each pair of legislators write on a different topic so the student legislature has a variety of bills to consider.
4. Find something that will improve the state. Remember, some Bill topics are presented year after year and delegates are tired of them. It is time to move on and leave behind some of these issues – driver’s test for senior citizens, lowering the drinking age, same sex marriage, prostitution, etc.
5. Prepare a preliminary draft of the Bill.
  - a. Use the library and internet for materials with the facts to support the Bill – and the view of those who may have other ideas and solutions.
  - b. Check with authorities for their views (Public Health, Education, Government, Law Enforcement, Economic Development, Business, Labor, Community Organizations, Faith Groups, etc.)
  - c. Determine the constitutionality of the proposed Bill by referring to the State and Federal Constitutions and ask a lawyer.
  - d. YG Legislation must be within the constitutional authority of the state government...not “federal government.”
  - e. Find the section of the State Code where the proposed Bill “fits.” Cite (write) that section number in the Preamble of your Bill.
6. Ask others to critique the Bill to highlight arguments for and against as well as to make suggestions on how to improve it.
7. Draft the Bill in the proper form. Type the Bill in the format outlines in this manual. Bills are typed for the Bill Book as received so make sure spelling, grammar, sentence structure, and Code citations are all accurate.
8. Research the Bill topic for presentations to the Committee, Legislature, Lobbyists, Governor and Cabinet.

## TOPIC IDEAS

Education

Healthy Living

Public Health

Safety

Environment

Entrepreneurship

Technology

Community

Development

Jobs

With your partner, brainstorm some additional topics:

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 make 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. What ideas do I have from my volunteer community service for legislation?

Write your idea for a Bill.

# Information on Current Issues

1. Newspaper – News online - Local, state or national give ideas on what people do or don't want, like or don't like.
2. Interview community people – those who are prominent, those who are not and those who are down and out. Get views on the issues people believe need legislative attention.
3. Consider any condition in the school, neighborhood, town or county that make it difficult for people, organizations and/or community to achieve their potential.

## Drafting a Bill

Now that the topic is selected and the proposed legislation is known, get a copy of current legislation from the State Code. Every Bill topic has been thought of in some form and the legislation is in the State Code. Since everything has a place in the State Code, the way to write new legislation is to change an existing law to make it say what one wants it to say. Copies of the State Code can be found in libraries, the county courthouse and the office of an attorney and online.

Here are some additional Bill drafting specifics . . .

1. Determine the specific part of the State Code the proposed legislations will change by amendment, addition or deletion.
2. In the preamble to the Bill, write the specific number of the State Code being amended, added to or deleted.
3. Write the proposal in Bill Form found in the manual.
4. Review the draft, have others review it, check for new facts, etc. and then prepare the final Bill using correct English, the correct reference to the State Code and YG format.



# Bill Drafting Instructions

Limit the bill to one topic. Write in ordinary, concise and uniform language that follows the rules of the YG Bill construction. YG Bills contain:

- A. **TITLE:** Clearly express the subject in a short title without going into detail.
- B. **PREAMBLE:** State the section of the State Code being amended, added to or being deleted. Include a brief statement of purpose.
- C. **ENACTING CLAUSES:** Begin with "BE IN ENACTED BY THE STUDENT LEGISLATURE"

D. **BODY:** Use language as common as the topic allows and arrange it as simply as possible. Use as few words as possible. Use short sentences.

1. **LANGUAGE:** Use present tense. Deal with facts. Short, familiar words that express the meaning intended are best.
2. **DEFINITIONS:** If needed, put at the beginning of the Bill.
3. **EXPRESSION OF LIMITATION:** If the Bill is limited in its application or is subject to an exception or condition, begin the sentence with the limitation, exception or condition or with an expression pointing out any limitation that follows.
4. **USING NUMBERS:** Use words to express numbers.
5. **NUMBERING SECTIONS:** Use consecutive Arabic figures.
6. **LENGTH OF SECTIONS:** YG Bills can only be 33 lines double spaced. Sections are short. The outline numbering order is:

Section number (may have a decimal fraction)

Subdivision (a)

Paragraph (1)

Subparagraph (A)

Sub sub paragraph (i)

7. **IMPLEMENTATION:** Include any penalty, appropriation and authority to administer.
  8. **LENGTH OF BILL:** YG Bills are no more than thirty-three (33) lines double spaced.
- E. **EFFECTIVE CLAUSE:** State the date the Bill becomes law if passed and signed by the Youth Governor. The Effective Clause is a separate section.

# Bill Format

Available online at [www.ylaleads.org](http://www.ylaleads.org) under Youth in Government

YLA Student Legislature (insert current year)

Bill # \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsors: (Name) \_\_\_\_\_, (Name) \_\_\_\_\_

Committee # \_\_\_\_\_

Delegation: \_\_\_\_\_

Member of # \_\_\_\_\_

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**(A BILL)**

**( --- INSERT TITLE NAME --- )**

BE IT ENACTED BY THE STUDENT LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF \_\_\_\_\_)

1 Section 1:

2 (However many lines it takes per section, each line is numbered.)

3

4

5 Section 2:

6

Section ?. (Last section) This Bill shall go into effect (number of days, months or years) following passage..



# Bill Example – West Virginia

YLA Student Legislature 2025 Bill # \_\_\_\_\_  
Authors: (Name) \_\_\_\_\_, (Name) \_\_\_\_\_ Committee # \_\_\_\_\_  
School \_\_\_\_\_ Member of # \_\_\_\_\_

**A BILL  
MANDATORY “LIFE SKILLS” CLASSES IN ALL PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS**

*To be added to Chapter 18 of the West Virginia State Code.*

BE IT ENACTED BY THE STUDENT LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA:

1 Section 1. (a) life skills – abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable  
2 humans to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of life. (b) class – a course  
3 of instruction.

4 Section 2. The purpose of this bill is to ensure that the graduating classes every year  
5 are supplied with ample knowledge of basic life skills they will need, especially when  
6 transitioning into adulthood. These life skills classes will teach students how to cook,  
7 how to balance a checkbook, and manage a bank account, how to invest money, how  
8 to apply to and successfully interview for a job, and give them an understanding of  
9 credit cards and credit scores, bills, taxes house/car purchases, student loans,  
10 insurance, and fine print on contracts. Students of the incoming class of 2025 and all  
11 proceeding classes will be required to have one life skills credit in order to graduate  
12 high school.

13 Section 3. By passing this bill, high school students will be prepared and have a better  
14 understanding of essential life skills that will make them less likely to make  
15 unnecessary mistakes when they graduate and transition into college, the workforce,  
16 and adulthood in general.

17 Section 4. Any funding necessary to execute the contents presented in this bill will be  
18 Provided through legislative funding from the West Virginia State Board of Education,  
19 Funding from county board of education, and the West Virginia State Legislature if  
20 necessary.

21 Section 5. This bill will go into effect at the beginning of the 2024-2025 school year.

# Bill Example – Ohio

YLA Student Legislature \_\_\_\_\_ 2025 Bill # \_\_\_\_\_  
Authors: (Name) \_\_\_\_\_, (Name) \_\_\_\_\_ Committee # \_\_\_\_\_  
School \_\_\_\_\_ Member of # \_\_\_\_\_

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## **A BILL** **A To allow public universities and colleges to take stances on** **“controversial” topics and to conserve free speech.**

*“To give universities the training in how to sanction conversations touching on “controversial” topics and providing resources  
in which students and teachers feel comfortable to do so.*

BE IT ENACTED BY THE STUDENT LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF OHIO

2 Section 1. Let Ohio begin having diversity and inclusion training requirements, so that  
3 Public Universities and colleges may be allowed to formulate opinions on topics labeled  
4 "controversial" such as current events, racism, politics, etc. Said bill would promote  
5 diversity within schools in Ohio. It aims to create an inclusive and welcoming  
6 environment for students from all backgrounds, assuring that everyone, no matter race,  
7 ethnicity, political views, or financial stance. As well as enabling a safe environment in  
8 which all can voice opinions. Currently Universities and Colleges cannot voice their  
9 opinions based on the GOP-dominated Ohio senate 21-10 performed on Wednesday,  
10 May 17, 2023. Additionally, Colleges and Universities are not required to undergo  
11 Diversity training and therefore are not educated on how to formulate an environment  
12 that properly sanctions Controversial conversations.

13 Section 2: The purpose of this bill is to protect the first amendment rights of students  
14 and teachers and to elevate their education and life skills. Students need to learn how to  
15 have controversial and challenging conversations in order to grow as scholars and  
16 human beings. Teaching these challenging topics in schools will improve students'  
17 social skills and help them become better citizens with open minds. The purpose of this  
18 bill is not to enforce ideas on students or teachers but to have them each express their  
19 own opinion on the subject matter. These conversations are crucial to education in

20 America.

21 Section 3: In order to initiate this bill, colleges and university faculties would undergo  
22 diversity training in which they will be taught how to not only address controversial  
23 subjects but how to appropriately do so. If a teacher or student were to take extreme  
24 actions during a conversation leading to violence in any way, said person will be  
25 immediately removed from the classroom and addressed by the dean of school.  
26 Schools will provide events that encourage students to voice their opinions, such as  
27 having clubs and/or organizations in which current events, or historically controversial  
28 topics will be addressed. Said clubs should allow all to share any and all opinions.  
29 Section 4: This bill shall be put into play six months after being under careful  
30 conversation on the first Sunday of the month.

## Bill Rating – Determines the Legislative Calendar

A Bill's rating determines its numerical position in the Bill Book and the order it will be considered in Committee and the Legislature.

Only complete Bills received in the YG Office by the deadline are rated for the position in the Bill Book. Complete Bills may be submitted one of two ways.

The **preferred** option is by email in either a word or PDF format attachments. You will submit a copy of your Bill using the required format explained in the prior section, Bill Supplement, and Resource Credentials.

If you choose to submit by mail, you must submit four (4) typed copies of the Bill in the correct format, one (1) Bill Supplement, and one (1) Resource Credential form.

You are also required to be registered online, code of conduct signed, and final fees paid.

Bill Rating is done by the YG Legislative officers, Committee Chairpersons and officer candidates.

### Bill Rating Criteria

1. The Bills deal with an issue of long-time and continuing interest or a new, current, or future interest. (15 points)
2. The Bill offers the Legislature a solution that is traditional OR is unique, challenging, or imaginative. (15 points)
3. The Bill benefits the people of the state as a whole OR solves a significant problem that affects a few. (10 points)
4. The research is thorough as demonstrated by the Bill Supplement, Resource Credential and quality of writing. (15 points)
5. The Authors demonstrate commitment to their Bill in the quality of their Bill Supplement, Research, and Certificate of original work. (7 points)
6. The Resource Credential is relevant, and an appropriate authority was consulted. (7 points)
7. The Bill is written using correct English and proper Bill Form (6 points)

NOTE . . . Bills submitted without a Bill Supplement OR a Resource Credential receive an automatic "0" rating. Bills that are copies of past Youth in Government legislation will receive a "0" rating and the authors disqualified from attending Youth in Government. No refunds will be given for dismissals.

### When Due

Submitted no later than Final Deadline listed in calendar – means have materials to your Advisor two weeks before the due date.

## **Late Bills and Plagiarized Bills are NOT Accepted**

1. All Bills are due in the YG Office by the deadline.
2. Since late Bills cannot be included in the Bill Book, Authors of late Bills disqualify themselves from participation in the program. Remember, there are no refunds.
3. Send original legislation. Do not copy Bills from past Bill Books. Students who submit plagiarized Bills from past YG's will be disqualified from participating and dismissed from the program. Remember, there are no refunds.
4. Do not submit a Bill written by parents, advisors, or others. Everyone is to do their own work!

## **Continuing Research and Preparation**

Once the Bill is written and submitted, the sponsors work continues! Just because the sponsors think their Bill looks good does not mean it is going to pass. The sponsors must convince all the other Legislators hearing the Bill in Committee to report it out to the House or Senate.

1. Continue reading on your topic and researching all sides of the issue. Sponsors need to know both the "Pro" positions and the reasons others may oppose the Bill.
2. Prepare – Practice speaking and answering questions before YG by presenting your Bill to a group of students, Student Council, a civic organization like Rotary, Kiwanis, school board or at a faculty meeting.
3. Prepare to answer questions. Know all sides of the issue better than anyone else.
4. Get advice from a Legislator, lawyer and others who know the Bill topic and Legislative process and how to best present your ideas.

## **What to Submit to YG Office**

- A copy of each bill. **Preferably** submitted by email in a pdf or word format.
- The bill supplemental information.
- The resource credentials
- If you did not register online, a copy of the individual's registration form.
- Sponsors (author) final fee
- If you must send your bill by mail, please paperclip all information together and do not use staples.

# Bill Supplements

Youth in Government Student Legislature

Bill Title \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsor(s) Name \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

Delegation Name \_\_\_\_\_

Answer These Questions (use additional paper as needed)

1. Why was this Bill Topic selected?
2. Where did the idea come from?
3. How will this Bill, if enacted, help the people of the state?
4. Would this legislation cost money? How much? Where will it come from?
5. We researched this Bill by . . .
6. In addition to our work to pass this legislation, we are doing the following to solve this problem
7. Exactly who will be affected by this legislation? How? (Who benefits, who bears any burden, does it impact all equally, etc.)
8. Why should the Student Legislature pass this Legislation?
9. Should this legislation be brought to the attention of the Governor and Legislative Leaders?



# Attach to this Supplement

A copy of the state code related to this Bill.

Three to five (3 to 5) pieces of research material as examples of the research done on this legislation. *Highlight* the relevant parts.

## CERTIFICATE

*We certify that the attached Bill is our own original work. No one else wrote it for us and it is not a copy of a previous Youth in Government Bill.*

Bill Author's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Bill Author's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please keep a copy of your Supplement and the research materials submitted to YG. The materials turned into YG will not be returned as they stay with the Bill for use by the Committee, Governor and Cabinet.

# Research Credential

YLA Youth in Government Student Legislature

1. Attach one (1) Resource Credential to your Bill.
2. Have the Resource Credential completed by a person knowledgeable in the issue your Bill addresses.

Names of Bill Sponsors \_\_\_\_\_

Delegation Name \_\_\_\_\_

Bill Title \_\_\_\_\_

This certifies that the Authors of this Bill came to me for assistance and I helped them in the following manner:

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_







# BEFORE YOU SEEK OFFICE ASK YOURSELF ~



## DO I HAVE THE TIME?

Officers serve the ALL YEAR. Officers are to prepare, to lead, and strengthen YLA by your service, example, and commitment.

## WHAT IS REQUIRED OF ME?

- You begin your service and are required to actively participate in YLA's annual **Leadership Summit** at Camp Horseshoe in **June**. If you cannot participate the entire 6-days, your position will be revoked.
- **Bill/Case Rating** in **February**. All officers including cabinet members, committee chairs, and associate justices are required to participate in Bill/Case Rating. This is where the calendar for YG is established and officer training happens. Lobbyist are encouraged to attend so you can chose the bills you want to lobby. Members of the press are encouraged to attend.
- **YOUTH IN GOVERNMENT** in **April**. If you cannot fulfill your duties at YG, do not apply. Give that opportunity to someone who can.

Officers are ENCOURAGED to participate in YLA's annual Fall Conference in November.

**TOGETHER** we build a stronger YG engaging more students strengthening our schools, communities, and state.

## CONTACT:

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