

HOW GOVERNMENT WORKS

Student/Class Goal

Students want to be informed citizens about how their government works and are concerned about current political issues and proposed legislation affecting them.

Outcome *(lesson objective)*

Students will organize and present information about how our laws are made in a flow chart and use appropriate vocabulary to describe the various parts of the government.

Time Frame

2 hours

Standard *Read with Understanding*

NRS EFL 4-6

Purpose	Benchmarks	Word Knowledge	Benchmarks	Comprehension	Benchmarks
Purpose for reading	4.1, 5.1, 6.1	Decoding skills		Strategy use	4.11, 5.11, 6.11
Select text		Word parts		Text structural elements	
		Context clues		Genres	
		Reference materials	4.6, 5.6, 6.6	Literary analysis	
		Word relationships		Drawing conclusions	4.15, 5.15, 6.15
		Content vocabulary	4.8, 5.8, 6.8	Making connections	4.16, 5.16, 6.16
		Figurative language			
		Fluency			

Materials

System of Checks and Balances Overhead
 Vocabulary aids
How Government Works Flowchart
How a Bill Becomes a Law Flowchart
 Additional historical resources
 How Government Works Learning Objects

Learner Prior Knowledge

What are the three branches of government? Why is it necessary to have the three branches of government? How do citizens' ideas become laws? Brainstorm as a class to decide what duties each branch carries out. Create a diagram showing the duties of each branch. Use [Congress in the Classroom](#) as an information resource. For those unfamiliar, explain that graphic organizers are a picture that shows how the ideas in a selection are related to one another. This might be in the form of a flowchart, tree diagram, or other picture that uses lines, boxes, and so on, to show how ideas connect. *System of Checks and Balances* Overhead would be one example. The class can also brainstorm on the process of how a bill becomes a law. The results of these brainstorming sessions should be saved to use later when students begin their group work.

Instructional Activities

Step 1 - Teacher makes a 3 column chart related to the executive, judicial and legislative branches of government. Students brainstorm words they already know that relate to each branch and discuss their meaning. Use websites listed to find glossaries of words related to government. Continue to add to this list as students proceed throughout the lesson.

Additional practice on vocabulary words can be accomplished by developing [Word Sorts](#) from the student list above. Students will work in small groups to create a crossword puzzle including clues and answers on the American Government. Class can use a crossword puzzle software program or use an online site, such as [Puzzlemaker](#). Students will complete the crossword puzzles created by the small groups. They can choose to do this individually or with a partner.

Step 2 - Students will also fill out a graphic organizer of how a bill becomes a law, making sure to write the correct steps in the right places with descriptions of each step completed. Have several blank flowcharts available for pairs or triads to complete the steps. Students can research information online at [How a Bill Becomes a Law](#) or [How Our Laws are Made](#) or use available classroom or library resources. Report out and display charts when completed.

TECHNOLOGY NOTE Inspiration is excellent software with graphic organizers.

Step 3- Have the group decide on a bill that might become a law, something that would affect them directly. Discuss suggestions and pick one. Then divide the class into the House and the Senate, with the teacher as the President. Write the bill on a large sheet of paper and actually give it to the House to discuss. Do the same with the Senate. Create a simulation of how the process is carried out. A Supreme Court could also be chosen to judge its fairness.

WRITING STANDARD EXTENSION Discuss how students think they could influence the outcome of a bill and write a letter to the House or Senate about the bill they are simulating.

Step 4 - Discuss what students have learned about the government and about how laws are made. GED level students may wish to continue to explore this topic by choosing a law of interest to them (past or present) and investigating the history of that law on the Internet or at the library. For example, trace the history of the Civil Rights Laws of the 1960s. They can share their findings with the rest of the class by giving a group presentation, creating a Power Point presentation or designing a poster-diagram.

Assessment/Evidence *(based on outcome)*

Crossword Puzzle
Graphic Organizer
Role-play Simulation
Teacher Observation
Teacher Made Quiz
End-of-Chapter Test

Teacher Reflection/Lesson Evaluation

Not yet completed.

Next Steps

Voting issues would be a natural extension of this initial information about our government. How Government Works Learning Objects will give students additional practice with how a bill becomes a law and the three branches of government.

Technology Integration

Congress in the Classroom <http://moodle.congressclass.org/>
US Government for Kids <http://library.thinkquest.org/5873/>
Quick Study - U.S. Government www.quickstudy.com
Contemporary Social Studies www.GEDsocialstudies.com
Office of the Clerk-House of Representatives <http://clerk.house.gov/>
Ben's Guide to the US Government <http://bensguide.gpo.gov/>
First Gov for Kids http://www.kids.gov/k_history.htm
How Our Laws are Made <http://www.juntosociety.com/government/laws.htm>
How a Bill Becomes a Law http://www.votesmart.org/resource_govt101_02.php
Word Sorts Teaching Strategy http://literacy.kent.edu/eureka/strategies/word_sorts.pdf
Puzzlemaker <http://www.discoveryeducation.com/free-puzzlemaker/?CFID=13472715&CFTOKEN=87165609>

Purposeful/Transparent

Students are able to evaluate their strengths and gaps about how the government works as well as their use of graphic organizers during the reading process. Teachers are being explicit about using particular graphic aids to strengthen student's reading ability.

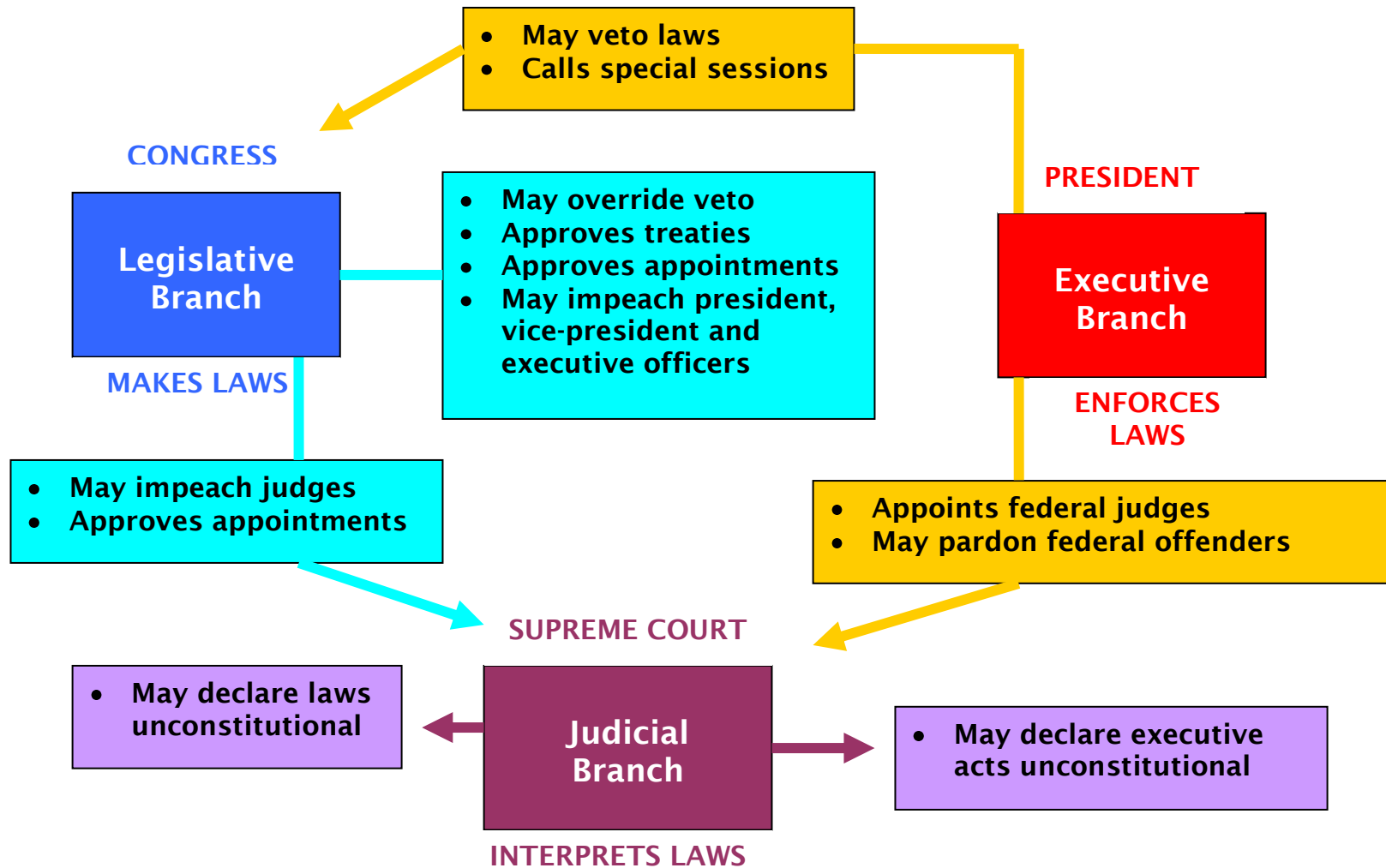
Contextual

During the simulation, students actively apply the knowledge and skills acquired by previous study of how a bill becomes a law.

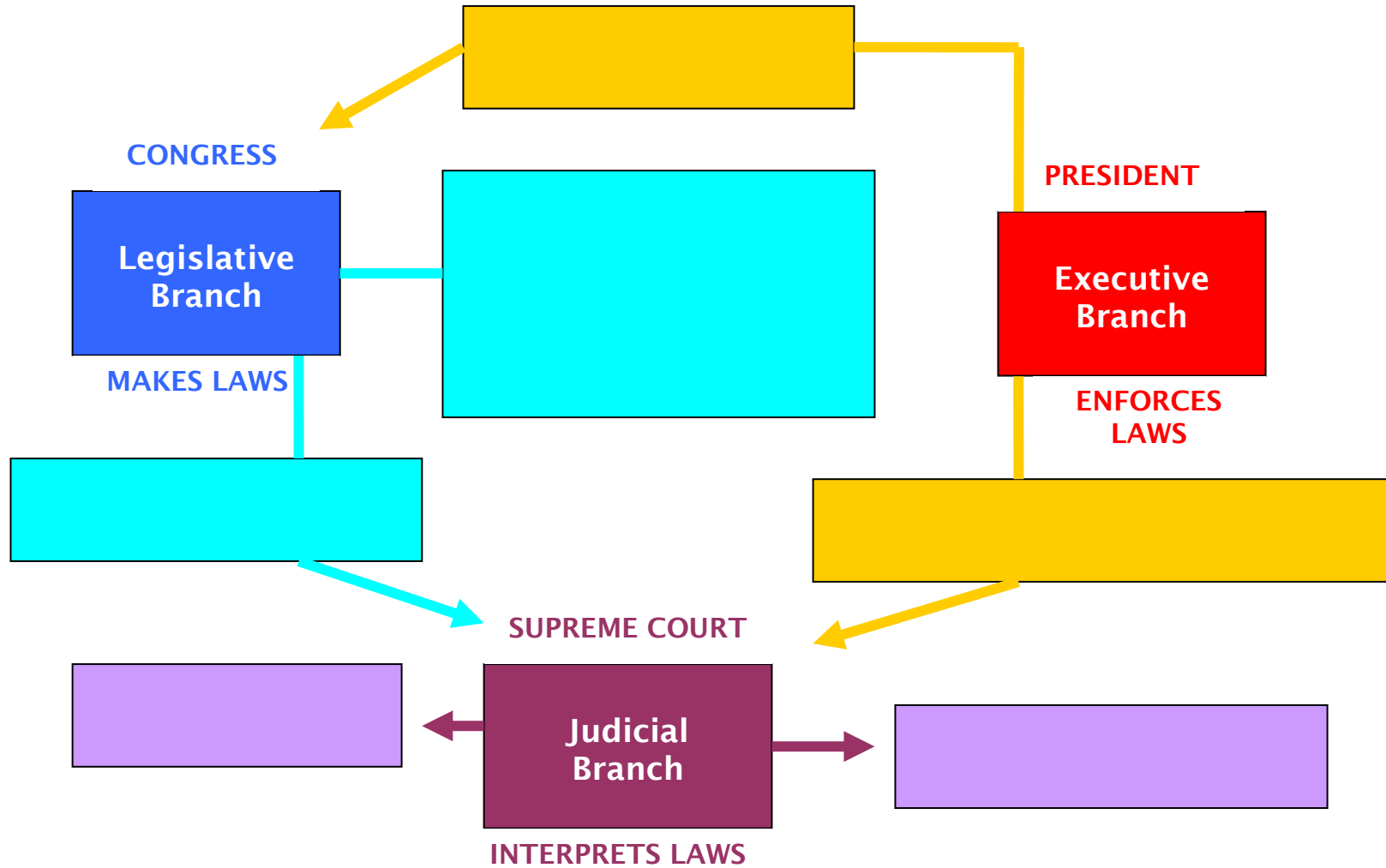
Building Expertise

During the role-play, students will reflect on what they've learned and apply this knowledge to a directly chosen issue about how laws are made.

SYSTEM OF CHECKS AND BALANCES



SYSTEM OF CHECKS AND BALANCES



CONSTITUTION



Congress
House of Representatives
Senate

President
Vice President

Supreme Court

Powers
To make the laws

Powers
To enforce the laws

Powers
To interpret the laws

Duties
To make federal laws, enter into treaties, approve appointments made by the President

Duties
Chief Executive - appoint all federal judges including all members of the U.S. Supreme Court and executive officers
Lawmaker - proposes or initiates laws, with the help of members of Congress (veto power)
Commander in Chief - the president is the highest military officer in the United States

Duties
The federal courts, spearheaded by the Supreme Court, step in to interpret the meaning of the Constitution

List the following people:

Speaker of the House
Secretary of State
Secretary of Defense
Secretary of Education
Attorney General

List the following people:

Chief Justice

CONSTITUTION



Powers

Powers

Powers

Duties

Duties

Duties

List the following people:

- Speaker of the House
- Secretary of State
- Secretary of Defense
- Secretary of Education
- Attorney General

List the following people:

- Chief Justice



How a Bill Becomes a Law Flowchart

About 10,000 bills are introduced per year. Each is given a number and assigned to a committee. There are 22 committees in the House of Representatives and 15 committees in the Senate.

BILL IS DRAFTED

Members of Congress, the Executive Branch, and even outside groups can draft (write or draw up) bills.

HOUSE

Bill is introduced and assigned to a Committee which refers to a Subcommittee. Only members can introduce bills.

SUBCOMMITTEE

Members study the bill, hold hearings, and debate provisions. Marks up the bill. If it passes goes to Committee.

COMMITTEE

Full Committee considers the bill. If it approves the bill in some form, the bill goes to the Rules Committee.

RULES COMMITTEE

It issues a rule to govern debate on the floor. Sends it to the Full House.

FULL HOUSE

Debates the bill and may amend it. If it is different from the Senate version, it must go to a Conference Committee.

FULL HOUSE

Votes on bill, if it passes it goes to the President.

PRESIDENT

Can sign or veto the bill. Congress can override it by 2/3 majority vote in the House and Senate. President can sign the bill, veto it or do nothing.

SENATE

Bill is introduced and assigned to a Committee which refers to a Subcommittee.

SUBCOMMITTEE

Members study the bill, hold hearings, and debate provisions. Marks up the bill. If it passes goes to Committee.

COMMITTEE

Full Committee considers the bill. If it approves the bill in some form, the bill goes to the Rules Committee.

FULL SENATE

Debates the bill and may amend it. If it is different from the House version, it must go to a Conference Committee.

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

Senators and Representatives meet to reconcile differences between bills. When agreement is reached, a compromise bill is sent to Full Senate.

FULL SENATE

Votes on bill, if passes it goes to the President.





How a Bill Becomes a Law Flowchart

About 10,000 bills are introduced per year. Each is given a number and assigned to a committee. There are 22 committees in the House of Representatives and 15 committees in the Senate.

BILL IS _____
Who can draft or write a bill?

HOUSE

SENATE

SUBCOMMITTEE

SUBCOMMITTEE

COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE

RULES COMMITTEE

FULL SENATE

FULL HOUSE

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

FULL HOUSE

FULL SENATE

PRESIDENT





<http://www.wisconline.org>

The Duties of the Three Branches of Government

Author: Cindy Gibson

School: Northcentral Technical College **Date:** 1/28/2005

Description: Students read about the legislative, executive, and judiciary branches of the U.S. government and then test their knowledge in a drag-and-drop exercise.

http://www.wisc-online.com/objects/index_tj.asp?objID=SOC5904

How a Bill Becomes a Law

Author: Melanie Buyarski

School: Fox Valley Technical College **Date:** 6/16/2005

Description: In this colorful activity, learners follow the path of a bill as it begins in the House of Representatives.

http://www.wisc-online.com/objects/index_tj.asp?objID=SOC5804

Gerrymandering

Author: Mona Wenrich

School: Fox Valley Technical College **Date:** 4/28/2003

Description: Students read about the illegal practice of manipulating the boundaries of legislative districts for political gain. They then create their own gerrymandered districts in a drag and drop exercise.

http://www.wisc-online.com/objects/index_tj.asp?objID=SOC5502