

**TENNESSEE YMCA**  
**YOUTH IN GOVERNMENT**  
**CONFERENCE MANUAL**



**PART 2:**  
**HOUSE & SENATE BILL**  
**WRITING INFORMATION**

# YIG BILL OVERVIEW

1. Each bill team will submit **ONE BILL**.
2. You must register for YIG using the registration page before you upload your bill in the Upload Center.
3. Once you have written your bill, go to our website [www.tennesseeccce.org](http://www.tennesseeccce.org). Click on the **Youth In Government** tab and select **Upload** from the drop down menu. Then follow the links to upload your bill to the appropriate conference.
4. To upload your bill, simply type or copy/paste the main text of your bill in the space provided.  
**DO NOT** include line numbers.  
**DO NOT** include special characters.
5. Remember that plagiarism is not tolerated.
6. All bills must be uploaded to the YIG Upload Center by **Final Deadline** to ensure that they are in the conference book. Late submissions are not eligible for awards.
7. To begin your research, consult **Bill Writing 101**.  
To begin drafting your bill, consult **How to Draft a Bill**.  
To prepare for debate, consult **How to Present a Bill**.  
For extra information, consult **How to Write a Fiscal Line Item, Legislative Glossary of Terms, Understanding the Committee Process, and Sample Bills**.

# BILL WRITING 101

Below are 10 steps to help you think through the process of writing and presenting your bill. Answering these questions will ensure your bill is thorough and that you are prepared for debate.

1. Come up with a bill idea or topic that interests you and your partner.
2. Is this something the State can address? Are you sure it isn't a local or federal issue? Are you sure it isn't better addressed by a private institution?
3. Search Tennessee Code (<https://tn.gov/commerce/article/cont-laws>) to find out whether your idea is already law.
4. If your idea is already law, can/does that law need to be changed? If your idea isn't already law, where in the codes would that idea best be placed?
5. Does your idea violate the State or Federal Constitutions? Would this idea require an amendment to the State Constitution?
6. Has anybody tried this idea recently? How did that go? Can you learn from their mistakes or successes?
7. Look for advocacy groups or similar laws/proposals in other states, and see if there is helpful data/information connected to them.
8. Consider the cost of your idea. How much does it cost? Who/what department pays for it? How will that happen?
9. Draft your legislation. (See "How to Draft a Bill")
10. Work on your talking points for your introduction:
  - a. What problem does this legislation solve?
  - b. What are the cost concerns?
  - c. What would opponents say about your idea? How can you convince them they are incorrect?

# HOW TO DRAFT A BILL

As you are drafting your bill, your goal should be to express your best ideas and analysis in response to the matter you are trying to address. You should aim to clearly define your subject matter, to set forth solutions that can be effectively applied, and to be as brief and simple as is possible.

## PARTS OF A BILL:

### 1. SPONSORS

Sponsors are the delegates who have written the bill. Be sure to list all sponsors when uploading your bill.

### 2. TITLE

The Title of your bill should summarize the effects of the bill. It should be brief and cover the major points of your bill. The first words of your Title should be "AN ACT TO" or "A RESOLUTION TO." Your Title is not amendable. Please note that if the actions in the body of your bill do not match your title, your bill could be considered omnibus.

AN ACT TO REQUIRE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT EDUCATION IN MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOLS

### 3. BODY:

i. **Enacting clause:** Each bill must contain an enacting clause, and it takes the following form.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE TENNESSEE YMCA YOUTH IN GOVERNMENT

ii. **Definitions** (if necessary): If your bill contains words that need to be defined for the benefit of debate, you will do this in Section 1.

Section 1: Terms in this act will be defined as follows:

a. Civic Engagement- promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes.

iii. **Sections:** The substance of your bill should be broken down into sections with each section dealing with a separate matter within the bill.

Section 2: All public middle and high schools will be required to offer a course on civic engagement.

Section 3: The standards for that course will be set by the Tennessee Department of Education.

- iv. **Fiscal Line Item:** Because the Governor is required to pass a balanced state budget, each bill must contain a fiscal line item specifying how much the enactment of the law will cost, from where the funds will come, etc.

Section 4: This addition of this course will cost \$3,000,000 and will be funded through the Tennessee Department of Education budget.

- v. **Repealing Clause:** This section must be a part of your bill, and it takes the following form.

Section 5: All laws or parts of laws in conflict with this are hereby repealed.

- vi. **Effective Date:** The last section of the act must state when the act is to take effect, and it takes the following form.

Section 6: This act shall take effect June 1, 2018, for the public welfare requiring it.

## CHECK YOUR BILL:

### Does your bill...?

- Consider only one subject?
- Pertain to matters of STATE law (not local or federal)?
- Express the subject of the bill in the TITLE?
- Contain the appropriate enacting clause?
- Contain the appropriate fiscal line item?
- Contain an effective date?
- (if amending an existing law) State the current law and the proposed changes?
- Include definitions of terms, if necessary?
- Express the source of any funds required for the new law?
- Express the penalty if people do not obey the law?

### Is your bill....?

- Your own independent material?
- Written in the correct format?
- Divided into numbered sections?
- Clear and Concise?
- Decidedly NOT omnibus? (Definition of omnibus: the content of the bill does not match the title of the bill)
- Constitutional?

# HOW TO PRESENT A BILL

1. **Introduction:** You have two minutes for your opening remarks. In your opening remarks you will do two things:
  - a) Identify the problem: Typically, you should begin with a compelling story or statistic related to your issue. Make sure you explain the problem you aim to solve to your fellow delegates.
  - b) Propose your solution: State your solution in general terms without becoming too abstract. Keep overly technical information to a minimum, and refer delegates to your bill.

Example: For a bill that puts a maximum interest rate on credit cards you could say, "Excessively high interest rates on credit cards can be harmful to consumers. This bill will use a special formula to set a limit on credit card interest rates."

If you don't use the full two minutes, you should reserve the remaining time of your opening remarks for your summation in case you need to further address any points made during debate. To do this, simply say at the end of your introduction, "I reserve any remaining time for my summation."

2. **Technical Questions:**
  - a) During Technical Questions, speakers may ask any non-debatable, non-subjective question that can be answered with "Yes," "No," a number, or a short sentence.
  - b) You should research definitions, statistics, and basic facts about the problem you are solving and your proposed solution so that you will be able to answer questions during this time.
3. **Con/Pro Debate:**
  - a) During Con/Pro Debate, speakers have three choices and may choose to do two: ask a series of questions, address the floor, and yield time to a fellow delegate. The speaker must tell the chair at the beginning which actions they plan to take. For instance: "[Your Name and High School], may I ask a series of questions and reserve my right to address the floor?"
  - b) A series of questions begins a dialogue between the patrons and the speakers where more complex questions can be answered, addressing the floor gives the speaker an opportunity to voice their opinion on the bill while urging passage or failure, and yielding your time to a fellow delegate allows the speaker to select a delegate who will have the opportunity to either address the floor or ask a series of questions.
  - c) To prepare for Con/Pro debate, try to think of criticisms and questions people may have of your bill. During Con/Pro debate, keep notes of important points made both for and against your bill to address in your summation.
4. **Summation:** Here you should briefly answer a few of the major criticisms heard during debate and restate your argument for your bill. This will be your last opportunity to address the delegates before voting or ranking. You will have one minute plus any time you yielded from your introduction.

# HOW TO WRITE A FISCAL LINE ITEM

Please review the following information in order to make certain your bill meets the necessary fiscal criteria.

## How will we arrive at a budget?

When considering the budget, it is important to remember not only the legislation passed during the conference, but also that all currently existing Tennessee programs and departments must continue to be funded. For the purpose of the 2018 conference, we will use the Tennessee Budget for Fiscal Year 2016-2017 as a model for our own.

## So how does this apply to you in writing your bill this year?

To aid our governor in the creation of his or her budget, it is necessary for every bill to include a fiscal line, describing the financial effects of your bill on the state budget. Your bill may have one of several effects:

- 1) Your bill may have no financial effect upon the state, if so, a fiscal note must still be included, stating the same, or
- 2) Your bill may raise revenues for the state. In this case the fiscal note should include both the projected revenue, and a designation for this revenue. Designations for said revenue may include already existing state departments and programs or it may be allocated to the discretionary spending fund for the state legislature. Most bills should allocate revenues to the discretionary spending funds, or
- 3) Your bill may cost the state money. In this case, the fiscal note should specify the expected cost to the state, and should also include the source of the funding for this cost. You may either transfer funds from an existing state department or program, or allocate funds from the legislature's discretionary spending.

It is important to note that every dollar spent from the discretionary spending fund must be raised by another piece of legislation passed by the conference. If discretionary outlays are greater than the revenue generated, then the governor may not be able to fund every piece of legislation passed, and some bills will not be signed.

When writing your bill, you will need to consider the current fiscal year (2016-2017) state budget as you determine the nature of your fiscal line item. To write a fiscal line item first you need to decide what department your legislation would be enforced by and/or impact. For example, if your bill calls for a new after school program in public elementary schools, such a program will be administered by the Department of Education. Your fiscal line item must indicate how and where the Department of Education will get the money to fund the program. **The budget figures for each department are available in the Fact Book published by the Legislature at this link: <http://www.legislature.state.tn.us>. The Fact Book is located on the right side of the Legislative page.** Remember you can only base your funding on state dollars, i.e. you can't take it from earmarked Federal Funds.

Remember also that you always have the amendment process at the conference should you need to change or add to your fiscal line item after the deadline for bill submission.

# UNDERSTANDING THE COMMITTEE PROCESS

## What should delegates do during committee?

### 1. Evaluate Bills

- Evaluate bills using the criteria on the ranking form, i.e., Presentation, Feasibility, Statewide Impact, Research, and Content.
- Will the end result be a meaningful contribution to a value-oriented society?
- Will it have a positive effect on a significant number of citizens?
- Is its issue worthy of legislative consideration?
- Is the bill in conflict with the Constitution? (And if so, then has the bill been written in the form of a Constitutional Amendment?)
- Does the bill provide for the concise accomplishment of its intended purposes?

### 2. Make Amendments

- Proposed amendments given in committee should be attached to the respective bill, with the proponents name(s) (persons offering the amendment) listed on the amendment. Any delegate may propose an amendment on any bill. The committee will vote on the proposed amendment. In order to submit an amendment for vote, use only the proper amendment form, and clearly indicate whether the amendment is FAVORABLE or UNFAVORABLE to its patrons.
- A majority vote is required to pass an amendment in committee. Proponents should be prepared to present and defend the amendment on the floor as debate will take place on an amendment if it is deemed unfriendly by the bill patrons.
- Committee proposed amendments will be considered on the floor.

### 3. Debate (The rules for debate are listed in the Rules of Procedure)

### 4. Rank Bills

- After each bill has been considered and some action has been taken, the committee will rank the respective bill. Red House/Senate bills will be ranked separately from Blue House/Senate bills.
- Each BILL TEAM will rank each bill on the ranking form provided, based upon the instructions given by the Chair. (This means each team will fill out only ONE ranking sheet.)
- Please be sure to write legibly on your ranking form. If there are any questions regarding legibility, the form in question will be thrown out.