



## **Sample Lesson: “Creating Space Law”**

### **Objective**

Thoroughly discuss current laws concerning governance of the moon as well as necessary laws that should be implemented.

### **National Standards Met**

NCSS 6—Power, Authority, Governance

NSES 6—Science and Personal and Social Perspective

# Creating Space Law: A Congressional Model

## Objectives:

- Students will learn about space law based on preliminary information about national and international issues related to space travel.
- Students will create congressional bills designed to create space law and space policy for the United States.
- Students will then write speeches for or against making these bills into law.
- Students will gather as a legislative body, make speeches and answer questions about their stance on these particular bills, and vote.

## Grade Level

9-12

## Subject Areas

Social Studies  
Political Science  
Speech  
Forensics  
Debate

## Timeline

Four 45-minute periods

## Background

Students will have been presented with the various issues related to space law in a brief and open discussion.

## Materials

Writing materials and research materials

## Lesson

Day One: Bill Writing

1. The students brainstorm areas of policy development and legal issues related to space.

Some possible areas of legal interest include:

Colony on the moon

International cooperation

Liability of falling space debris

Manned versus unmanned missions

Military use of satellites and other space weaponry

Nuclear powered rockets

Ownership of the moon

Passenger travel

Planned mission to Mars  
Privacy issues related to surveillance satellites  
Privatization of the space program  
Regulation of independent companies engaging in space travel  
Requirements for astronauts  
Space debris  
Space Shuttle safety  
Taxing satellites as they cross overhead  
U.S. liability for independent companies engaging in space travel  
United Nations supervision of all space programs

Topics related to extraterrestrials could also be introduced as a lighter area of discussion, depending on the maturity level of the students.

The brainstorming activity can be done as a class, in small groups or individually, depending on the level of the students.

2. Students will choose a specific legal issue and write a bill based on that issue. The bill should be written to convey what law the government should enact on the particular issue.

It must state specifically what the law will be and it must include a brief rationale for why this law is necessary.

Again, depending on the level of the students this could be done in paragraph form or, for more advanced students, using the format of an actual Congressional bill.

Also, depending on the level of the students, bills may be written in pairs, but larger groups for bill writing are not recommended.

3. Bills are collected at the end of the period. The most viable ones are selected and copies are made for all the students in the class. The number chosen should be based on how many that the students will be able to reasonably discuss in the time allotted for debate. Since discussion on each bill could range from five minutes to an hour depending on the interest level of the students, an average of 10-15 minutes per bill is a good rule of thumb, with possible one or two more bills for variety. For example, if the debate will only last one 45-60 minute period, perhaps 5 or 6 bills will suffice. So that a wide variety of topics is discussed, it is recommended that at least two class periods or 90-minutes be set aside for the actual Congress.

Bills should be chosen based on whether they present two equal sides for debate, whether they provide adequate opportunity for research and are clearly and concisely written. If students know that only select bills will be debated, that can also inspire greater effort to ensure that theirs is included.

The writing of the bills can be an overnight assignment, then either allow the students to participate in the selection process, or while the students are otherwise engaged, the teacher can select and copy the desired bills at the beginning of the class for distribution later in the period.

#### Day Two: Speech Writing

1. Students are given copies of the bills that will be discussed in Congress.  
2. Students are to choose a set number of bills and are to write speeches on them. The number assigned should be proportional to the number of bills that will be

discussed. 3-5 speeches is usually an adequate number.

Students should be given time to research the specific issues related to each bill using library or Internet resources. Then they are to write a well-organized speech with an introduction and a conclusion, and evidence and reasoning to support their opinion. It is important that each speech be specifically and clearly for or against the bill becoming law. In the interest of time, each speech written should be limited to 2-3 minutes. Inform the students that after their speech, other students will have the opportunity to ask questions so they do need to know what they are talking about.

Day Three (and Four, if desired): Congress

1. Students will be organized into a congressional chamber. Students may make placards using card stock folded in half lengthwise. They then write "Senator (last name)" and during the course of the Congress refer to each other as Senator.
2. One student will serve as presiding officer, whose duties will be to supervise the orderly debate of the issues, overseeing time limits for speeches, choosing the order of speakers, maintaining a balanced process and holding votes when debate on each bill has waned or ended. This student may be elected by the students as their first official act as a Congress or may be appointed by the teacher. It is also helpful to designate a second student to serve as clerk to assist the presiding officer.

3. The process should run as follows:

The clerk reads the title of the first bill.

The student who has written this bill reads their affirmative speech and answers questions.

A negative speech is then presented followed by questions.

Next an affirmative speech, then a negative one and so on.

When interest has waned, the presiding officer then will call for a vote.

After the vote, the clerk reads the title of the second bill.

This continues until all bills are discussed or until time has run out.

Note: Although many students will want to simply read the speeches they have written, part of the success of their speeches will be based on their persuasive quality. Simply reading a speech will be far less successful than one that is memorized and presented in a compelling manner. Also, students should be allowed to enhance their speeches by making reference to previous speeches and issues that have surfaced during the discussion.

In order to allow as many students as possible to participate, it is recommended that speeches be limited to three minutes with no more than two questions afterwards. These can be reduced in the interest of time if necessary. Also, the clerk or the presiding officer (or the teacher) should keep track of speaker order to guarantee that if two students want to speak next, the student who has spoken once gets to speak a second time before another speaker gives their fourth speech.

4. For lower level students, this can be done very informally with significant leadership from the teacher. For advanced students, the Congress can be student-run using Robert's Rules of Order.

## **Extensions**

Students can compare the laws that they passed to the current laws relating to space issues.

Students can communicate with their congressmen concerning their opinions of legal issues related to space.

Students can brainstorm what issues related to the space program will no longer be relevant in ten or twenty years and what new issues may arise.

## **Evaluation**

- Students will create congressional bills designed to create space law and space policy for the United States.
- Students will then write speeches for or against making these bills into law.
- Students will gather as a legislative body, make speeches and answer questions about their stance on these particular bills, and vote.
- Students will have three opportunities for evaluation.

## **Resources and Bibliography**

Lecture notes and handouts from “Rocketry and the Biology of Living in Space, Space History & Space Law” July 11-15, 2005

Information on running a Student Congress can be obtained from the National Forensics League. The pertinent information can be obtained from their manuals available at <http://www.nflcongressonline.net/phl2005/manuals.htm>

## Addendum

Rubric for bills and speeches written and presented

	4	3	2	1
Opinion	Opinion is clearly stated and easily understood	Opinion is stated but not elaborated	Opinion is unclear with both sides being supported or refuted	No opinion evident
Evidence and reasoning	Evidence that is cited and well developed is used to support the opinion	Evidence is used to support the opinion but isn't clearly linked or well defined	Some evidence is used to support the opinion, but isn't developed or always relevant	No evidence is used.
Organization	Organization is clear with an introduction and a conclusion and clearly defined points	Organization is apparent, with an introduction or a conclusion and identifiable points	Organization is unclear. Points are made but lacking any specific structure	No organization is apparent.

4	3	2	1	
Delivery	Speech is delivered clearly with clear enunciation and no irrelevant body movement and eye contact with the audience	Speech is understandable with minimal extraneous movement and some eye contact	Speech is difficult to understand in places and swaying or extraneous hand movements are present throughout. Eye contact is severely limited.	Speech is not understandable, movement and gestures are distracting and no eye contact is present.

Persuasive	Speech is delivered in a tone that communicates the speaker's belief in what they are saying and their desire to convince the audience	Speech is delivered in a way that keeps the audience listening, but not in a particularly persuasive manner.	Speech is delivered in a way that does not keep the audience's attention and the speaker's own interest in the topic seems questionable	Speech is delivered in a way that shows in no interest in the topic or in the audience
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