Student Handout #1
Passing a Bill through Congress

Ideas for a bill can come from anyone. Only members of Congress can officially introduce a bill.

THE HOUSE

All bills, including spending bills, can be introduced in the House.

COMMITTEE WORK

- Bills are assigned to a committee
- Hearings are held to inform members
- Bills are "marked up" or amended and then passed to the floor or dropped

FLOOR ACTION

- House members debate the bill.
- Time for debate is limited.

THE SENATE

Any bills, except spending bills, can be introduced in the Senate.

COMMITTEE WORK

- Bills are assigned to a committee
- Hearings are held to inform members
- Bills are "marked up" or amended and then passed to the floor or dropped

FLOOR ACTION

- Senate members debate the bill.
- Time for debate is not restricted.
- Senators can filibuster to stall passage.
- Filibusters can be stopped with a cloture vote of 2/3rds or 60 votes.

After a bill passes either chamber, it must go to the other and follow the same procedure. Any differences between the House and Senate versions are reconciled in a Conference Committee.

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

Once a bill passes both houses of Congress, it goes before a Conference Committee to reconcile any differences. If necessary, another vote is taken in both chambers.

PRESIDENT

The bill is sent to the President for signature to become law or vetoed. If the bill is vetoed, it goes back to Congress which can either accept the veto and make changes or try to override it with a 2/3rds majority of both Chambers.