**Writing the Bill**

Writing your legislation is easier than you might think. Below are some simple guidelines to follow for writing your bill.

**Select an area of interest:** The first step in writing your bill is to select a topic. You should write a bill on an area of local politics that you already know a little bit about. The next step is to pick one problem or issue from your general area of interest on which you want your legislation to focus. You might want to explore pending legislation at[http://www.congress.org](http://www.congress.org/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_new). http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/ <http://www.civilbeat.com/topics/hawaii-legislature/>

http://legiscan.com/HI

**Use the checklist to see if your “issue” qualifies.** If you can answer “yes” to at least one of the following, proceed:

 The majority of people throughout the state feel it is a problem to be solved at a state level.

 The local problem is severe

 The problem is identified as a national goal in by the U.S. Constitution (see the[preamble](http://www.congresslink.org/print_basics_histmats_constitution_preamble.htm%22%20%5Ct%20%22_self))

**Make sure that the problem really exists.**

 Is there solid statistical evidence from unbiased sources?

 Can you find honest assessments of the problem?

 Are you familiar with the existing conditions of the problem?

**Think of possible solutions to achieve your goal.**

 Is the goal of the solution clearly defined?

 Does the solution deal with the cause of the problem?

 Is the solution constitutional?

 Does the solution seem to efficiently solve the problem?

**Determine the type of legislation.**

 A bill: establishes a new law.

 A congressional resolution: expresses the sentiment of Congress.

 A constitutional amendment: changes or adds to the U.S. Constitution

**Drafting your bill.**

To begin drafting your bill you must first concisely, in 5 to 15 words, state the purpose of your legislation. For example, legislation on drug testing might be “to provide for drug testing of all commercial vehicle operators.” Legislation on arm sales might be “to restrict military arm sales to democratically unstable countries.” This concise statement of purpose will be part of the title of your legislation.

**Rationale for Bills and Amendments.**

Next you need to develop the rationale, or justification, for your legislation. This should be a paragraph that explains reasons why your legislation is necessary.

**Rationale for Resolutions.**

All resolutions should contain “Whereas clauses” instead of a paragraph that gives reasons why the Congress should adopt the resolution. For example, whereas clauses for a resolution condemning offshore oil drilling might read:

 Whereas, Offshore oil drilling is a hazard to our coastlines and coastal wetlands, and;

 Whereas, the U.S. needs to decrease its dependence on oil and move to cleaner forms of energy, and;

 Whereas, oil rigs offshore are unsightly.

**The enactment clause.**

 For a bill: *“Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, that:”*

 For a resolution: *“Be it resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, that:”*

 For an amendment: *“Be it amended by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, and upon approval of 3/4ths of the States, that:”*

**The body of your legislation.**

The main portion of your legislation will be its provisions or sections.

 Section 1: Main effect of the legislation. The first section of drug testing legislation could be “All interstate commercial vehicle operations shall be subject to random drug testing at least once a year.”

 Section 2: Limitations and restrictions. “The results of the drug test are to be kept confidential by the employer.”

 Section 3: Penalties or fines. “Employers not complying with this law shall be subject to a fine of up to $10,000.”

 Section 4: Costs. Some estimation or general reference to cost.

**Typing guidelines for your bill.**

 Type on 81/2 x 11” paper with one-inch margins.

 Single-space and double-space between sections.

 Your bill must be neat so it can be copied and distributed.

 Your title must be centered on the top of the page.

 Type the names of the sponsoring senators (use your real names).

The body of the bill should be divided into sections and numbered, following the directions in steps 6-10 above.