

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____



HOW DOES AN IDEA BECOME A LAW IN FLORIDA???



Before we talk about Florida's legislative branch, let's refresh our memories about the federal legislative branch, the U.S. Congress. As you recall, the U.S. Congress has two bodies that must work together to make laws. That makes it a *bicameral* legislature. One body is the House of Representatives, which has 435 members. The other is the Senate and it has 100 members. Both the House and the Senate have to pass an identical bill for it to become a law.

Like Congress, the Florida Legislature also has two legislative bodies called the House of Representatives and the Senate. There are 120 Representatives and 40 Senators in the Florida Legislature. Unlike Congress, both state House and Senate members are elected by districts that are based on population. Citizens elect State Senators for 4-year terms in Florida (U.S. Senators have 6 year terms), while State Representatives have 2-year terms (same for U.S. Representatives). While there are a few differences, the U.S. Congress and Florida Legislature have similar rules and procedures for making laws.

Now you know what the legislative branch does, but you still need to know how they do it! This Prezi will show you how law-making happens. As you go through the Prezi, keep an eye out for red shapes. When you see one, read that slide. Then stop and answer the questions below that match the shape...



Assign The Committees!

Both legislatures use the committee system for analyzing bills. You will see one example on the Prezi of how a bill is assigned committees. Now here's another proposed bill trying to make its way through Florida's Legislature. *Your job is to read the description and assign this bill to the proper committees in the Florida Senate:*



Senate Bill 416 - Use of Wireless Communications Devices While Driving

Six Florida Senators (3 Republicans and 3 Democrats) heard from concerned citizens and highway safety organizations about the dangers of texting while driving. Together, they have drafted a bill that will make it against the law to text while driving. The new Senate Bill 416 just had its "first reading" and is now ready to be assigned to committees.

If you were the President of the Senate, which committees should you assign to this bill?

(Check all boxes that apply!)

- Transportation Committee Budget Committee Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee
 Communications, Energy, & Public Utilities Committee Education Committee

Why do you think both the federal and state legislatures use the committee system?



Debate The Bill!

In each committee that reviewed Senate Bill 416, almost all committee members gave it yeas, while only a few gave it nays! Since it passed all of its committees, the bill has been placed on the calendar for floor debate.

Based on what you've read and what you know, would you vote in favor of this bill or against it if you were a Florida Senator? *(Check one box)*

- I'd vote in favor of the bill I'd vote against the bill

Give one reason why you personally think this would be a good law or a bad law for Florida:

(If you were a Senator, this would be what you'd say during the floor debate)

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____



Can It Pass Through Both Chambers?

Before Senate Bill 416 had its readings on the floor in the Florida Senate, the session ended. So we don't know how the whole Senate would have voted. A similar bill also did not make it to a floor vote in the House. This means the bill and its sponsors (the legislators that supported it) will have to try again next year. That's because while Congress has a year-long session with recesses, Florida's legislature works only part-time—meeting for a two-month session every spring. **Next time legislators try to pass this law, a majority of Representatives and a majority of Senators both must vote in favor of it. Do you think this will be easy or difficult?**

Easy Difficult

Why do you think the U.S. Constitution and State Constitution both require a bicameral legislature? Do you think this is a good system for making laws? Why or why not?

What Will the Governor Do?



If Senate Bill 416 had passed both the Senate and then passed in the House, it would have made its way to the Governor's desk. While the legislative branch has most of the lawmaking responsibilities, you just learned what the executive branch's role is in the process.

Another bill is on the desk, and the Governor is considering all options. Advise the Governor about what happens for each possibility:

IF...	THEN
If the Governor decides to veto the bill...	
If the Governor decides to sign the bill...	
If the Governor decides not to sign the bill but also does not veto it...	

If the bill is vetoed, what do you think happens to the bill if two-thirds of the Florida House and Senate do not approve it? Why do you think the constitution allows a bill to be overridden even if the governor vetoes it?



Reflections

List as many ways as you can for how the public influences the lawmaking process. Then, circle the ones YOU can do now for an issue YOU care about.