



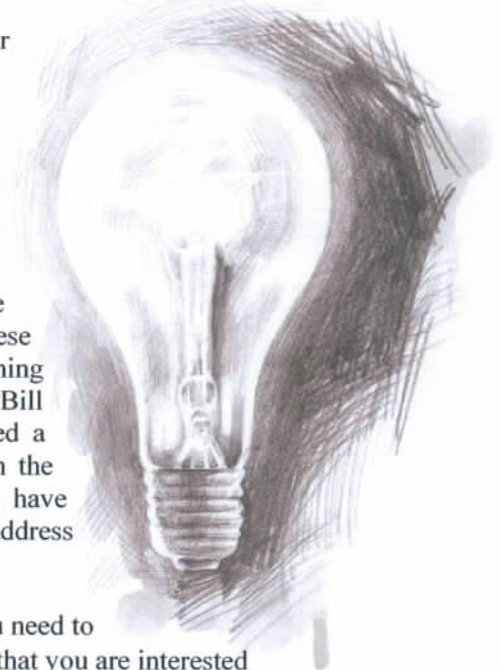
## GIRLS STATE AND BOYS STATE GUIDE TO BILL DRAFTING

**Congratulations** on your selection to the American Legion Boys State and American Legion Auxiliary's Girls State. This hands-on experience will provide you with lifelong skills to actively participate in your government and will provide you with the tools to fully understand Wyoming's legislative process. Now, you need to draft a bill to debate during Girls State and Boys State. How do I do that, you ask? Well, read on for some friendly non-legal advice and ideas about how to proceed.

**Who can help me draft a bill?** Well, if you were a Wyoming legislator you would simply contact the Wyoming Legislative Service Office (LSO) in Cheyenne. The LSO's Legal Services Division is responsible for drafting legislation on behalf of members of the Wyoming Legislature. LSO legal staff consists primarily of attorneys who have expertise in bill drafting procedures. These staff are responsible for molding legislators' ideas into

clear, concise, and legally correct language that conforms to statutory and constitutional requirements. The LSO legal staff draft bills on behalf of legislative committees and individual legislators. LSO does not draft bills at the request of state agencies, other elected officials or members of the public. Although you do not have LSO's legal team to assist you in drafting a bill for Girls State or Boys State, there are some general principles you can apply in drafting your own legislation and we have provided a few helpful hints below.

**Where do I find ideas for a bill?** Well, the best place to develop ideas for legislation is to look at your own life experience. Public policy problems are all around you. Think about a problem that you would like to solve. As a young person, this is a great opportunity to think about what you would like to change. Talking to your family, friends, and neighbors is another fruitful way to get ideas. Listen to the news. What do you want to "make better?" Now's your chance. Speaking to local legislators is a great way to learn how they get ideas for bills that they sponsor and they may be able to help you develop ideas for your own bill draft. You should also spend some time reviewing recent bills sponsored by Wyoming legislators. Finding these bills is only a click away on your computer. Just go to the Wyoming Legislature's web site at: <http://legisweb.state.wy.us> and click on the "Bill Information" link under "Session Information." When you have identified a problem, you will also want to spend some time gathering information on the problem and researching and evaluating alternative solutions. Once you have researched potential solutions, you can develop a proposed public policy to address the problem.



**Is my idea new?** Now that you have a problem and identified a solution, you need to do a little research to see if there is already a law "on the books" on the issue that you are interested in. If not, your bill would create a new law. If there already were a law, your bill would either repeal (i.e. delete) or amend an existing law. Or it might do a combination of all of the above. An easy way to remember is to think of the letters C-A-R: legislation can **create** new law, **amend** existing law, or **repeal** existing law.

**How do I know what's already in the law?** To find out what is already law in Wyoming, you will need to look at the Wyoming Statutes. Again, finding out this information is no further than your fingertips. Just visit the Wyoming Legislature's Web site and click on the "State Statutes" link. The Wyoming Statutes are organized into 42 titles, which are basically different subjects covered in Wyoming's law. Those "subjects" are broken down into further subcategories called chapters and articles. You can click down through the titles, chapters, and articles to get to the text of the law. This is a great way to learn more about Wyoming's laws. When LSO staff attorneys draft legislation on behalf of legislators, they conduct technical legal research. The staff attorneys review current statutes, check case law, and review constitutional provisions. You will not be doing this level of research, but spending some time browsing through the different titles is a great way to determine what is in Wyoming's statutes and become familiar with the laws of your state.

**Can I write a bill on any subject?** As long as the law doesn't conflict with the state or federal constitution or federal law, the Legislature can basically pass a law on anything. If the law would conflict with the Wyoming Constitution, the Legislature can propose an amendment to the Constitution. You should focus on problems in your community that can be addressed through a public policy solution. Since this activity is a simulation of Wyoming state government, you should focus on state issues.

**What information should I include in my bill?** You should not provide information in the text of the legislation about why the bill should pass. When you write your legislation, the bill just states what you want the law to be. It should not include your arguments regarding the merits of the bill and why you think it should pass. Save those ideas for the debate on the bill. The main point of the bill is to say what will happen and when. Just state what you want to have happen, state the consequences (if any), what will it cost (if anything) and who will pay for it, and when it takes effect. State in the legislation what will be prohibited or what will be done affirmatively. Your legislation should also state who is being affected; for example does your bill affect everyone or only those over a certain age? You should also provide for some type of enforcement if your bill places a prohibition on doing something or for failure to do something. When including a penalty for violating the law make it proportionate to the harm caused by the violation. If your legislation is going to take money or personnel to carry out the law, provide an appropriation and authorize additional personnel as necessary in your bill. State when the law will become effective.

**How much detail should I include in my bill?** Write in the most clear, precise, and simple language possible. Precision and clarity have to take precedence over simplicity in order to minimize confusion over what the law means. For example, the following sentence is simple but not precise: No one can go faster than 55 mile per hour. Compare that to this sentence, which is not as simple but more precise: No person shall operate a motor vehicle on any public highway in Wyoming at any speed in excess of 55 miles per hour. The first example would prohibit airplane travel and racing autos on racetracks, which was probably not what was intended.

**What is the correct format of the bill?** The Wyoming Constitution requires that bills sponsored by the Wyoming Legislature follow a very specific format. That format may be different than the requirements for the bills you are drafting for Boys and Girls State.

You should determine the formatting requirements of your bill required by the American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary. Now, you are ready to go out there and create, debate, amend, and act on your ideas during this unique opportunity to assume the role of a legislator. You will experience the excitement, challenges, and frustrations of the real legislative process and you will learn the importance of negotiation and compromise vital to our democracy. Good luck in getting your legislation passed during Boys State and Girls State and stay involved in Wyoming's future.

