

CONGRESS SIMULATION

Rules and Tools for Floor Debate

Mr. Peyton will be standing in for the Speaker of the House. This means that he will choose which bills to introduce, and when. He will also be maintaining the flow of the floor debate. Generally speaking, things will flow like this:

Introduction Phase

- The Speaker (Mr. Peyton) will introduce and read through a bill.
- The bill's author will have up to three minutes to argue in favor of his/her bill.

Debate Phase

- The Speaker will open the floor for debate. Any representative that wishes to speak must attract the Speaker's attention and be recognized before addressing the House. Members may continue to debate, provided they are first recognized by the Speaker.
- At any time, a member may propose a motion to end debate and vote on the bill as-read.
- If a motion to vote on the bill as-read is made, the Speaker will call for a second.
- If another member seconds the motion, the Speaker will ask if any member opposes (usually because he/she wishes to offer an amendment to the bill).

Amendment Phase

- The speaker will open the floor for amendments. Members wishing to offer an amendment may do so once recognized by the Speaker.
- After each amendment is proposed, the Speaker opens the floor for debate on that particular amendment.

"Closing" Options – Voting and "Tabling"

- If there are no objections at the end of the first debate phase, the bill may be voted on. Any member may, if he/she chooses, request a roll-call vote instead of a simple hand-raise count. During a roll-call vote, each member's voice vote is entered into the official record when his/her name is called.
- Every proposed amendment must be "closed" before a new one is allowed – either by a vote (motion, then second, then vote), or by "tabling" the amendment – setting it aside, or putting it "on the table" temporarily.
- Whole bills may also be tabled, if a member move to table it, another member seconds the motion, and there are no objections.

General Decorum – Some Tips on Being a Representative

As participants in this legislative exercise, you and your colleagues will gain from the experience what you put into it. It is essential that you adhere to your role at all times.

- You are always speaking to the chair.
- A member must attract the chair's attention by saying "Mr. Speaker".
- Thus, remarks commonly begin with "Mr. Speaker".
- Do not refer to your colleagues directly when addressing a committee or the chamber. For instance, if you wish to comment on the remarks of a colleague you would say, "Mr. Speaker, my distinguished colleague from Maryland has just said black is white and I would like to point out that"
- To ask a question or to make a comment while another member is speaking, you would say, "Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman (gentlewoman) yield?"
- You should refer to yourself as "I."
- To signify the conclusion of your remarks: "I yield back the balance of my time."
- To ask for clarification of the parliamentary situation: "A parliamentary inquiry, Mr. Speaker."
- To do something not permitted by the rules: "I ask unanimous consent that"
- To discuss or ask for clarification of a unanimous consent request: "Reserving the right to object"
- To enforce a rule: "I make a point of order against on the grounds that"

Reflection Questions

1. What was your overall impression of both the committee and congress simulations?
2. What new thing(s) did you learn during this process?
3. What else would you want to know about the way Congress works?