

MISSOURI YMCA YOUTH IN GOVERNMENT BILL PROCESS

The most exciting phase in the legislative process is trying to get your bill passed. Any bill can become law if it is based on a good idea, supported by research, presented with conviction, and carried by a strong network of support. The quality of each of these components rests on you, the individual, and thus your experiences in the Legislative Program depend heavily on your efforts. You are not working alone and the efforts of those around you are equally important. Individuals shape the work of the entire legislature by taking part in the whole process. Good legislators focus on the examination of each bill brought before them just as much as they concentrate on their own bill. You can make a difference in YIG by getting involved, which will enhance your own experience as well as the experiences of those around you.

BEHIND THE SCENES

You need to be prepared to discuss your bill with anyone who may play a role in passing it into law, including other legislators, news reporters, governor's staff members, and other student leaders.

1. Know your bill's strengths and be prepared to address criticisms.
2. Network with other legislators to build support for your bill.
3. Develop connections with staff members in the Governor's office.

PRESENTATION SPEECH

Simply knowing your topic well is not enough. You must organize your ideas into an effective presentation and practice delivering it until you can explain your ideas in a convincing and timely way without having to read your speech.

1. Discuss the importance of the issue and why it matters to Missourians.
2. Identify the problem addressed by your bill, including the causes of the problem.
3. Explain why the solution you offer is the best way to address the problem.
4. Be prepared to answer questions from other legislators. You may consider providing answers to anticipated questions in your speech.
5. Prepare a short summary of the main points to be used as closing remarks, leaving room to address questions brought up during debate.

COMMITTEE SESSIONS

The first time you formally present your bill is in a committee hearing. The committee will study, discuss, and prepare for the floor bills written by its members.

1. Prepare a brief presentation speech because the amount of time for each bill will depend on the number of bills assigned to the committee.

2. Be sure to cover the main points of your bill in your speech.
3. Be prepared to answer questions by having relevant statistics and research with you. The committee hearing is when legislators ask many detailed, specific questions.
4. Bills passed by the committee move on to the Rules Committee, which sets the calendar for debate on the floor. Make sure to lobby your committee chairperson to support your bill in the Rules Committee.

LEGISLATIVE SESSIONS

During these sessions, the author(s) of each bill that reaches the floor must present the legislation and allow the other legislators to debate and vote on the bill.

1. Stay aware of the calendar for the chamber to see where your bill is placed.
2. For your opening remarks, you will have eight minutes. Be sure to use a formal and detailed presentation speech. Use an outline or written speech to guide you and have your research readily available.
3. After your presentation, legislators will have the opportunity to ask you questions, and make speeches in affirmation or opposition to your bill. Be prepared to answer questions.
4. Enlist supporters of your bill to speak in affirmation, assisting them before debate by sharing your statistics and research.
5. Amendments may be offered and voted upon separately before being added to your bill.
6. In your closing remarks, address any concerns raised in debate. Also, briefly summarize your bill, making sure that the main points of your bill are clear to the chamber.
7. After approval, the other chamber must pass your bill. You need to find a legislator in the other chamber to sponsor your bill for you when it reaches the floor. Be sure this person is familiar with your bill and able to present it effectively.
8. If it passes the other chamber, you should meet with the Governor and his/her staff to lobby for your bill to be signed into law.

HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW IN YIG

In YIG, we attempt to follow the true legislative process as best we can. We face time and space constraints which require us to deviate some from the actual process used by the Missouri General Assembly. The following steps assume you are a member of the House of Representatives.

1. Submit your bill. Your bill will be assigned to a committee prior to the State Convention.
2. During the State Convention, your bill will be heard in committee. If your bill passes in committee, it is sent to the House floor. However, the Rules Committee sets the calendar of bills to be heard. There is no guarantee that your bill will be heard on the floor.
3. If your bill does pass the House, it is sent to the Senate floor. However, due to time constraints, your bill might not be debated in the Senate.
4. If the Senate debates and passes your bill, it is sent to the Governor. The Governor may sign your bill into law or may veto your bill.
5. If the Governor vetoes your bill, both the House and Senate must vote to override the veto with a two-thirds vote. If this happens, your bill becomes law.