
Legislation

§ 14 Subject Matter

- (a) **Threshold requirements.** All legislation **MUST** constitute a valid legislative response to a timely and significant issue of national interest. Legislation must propose a change from the status quo, offer a reasonable division of affirmative and negative ground, and be understood by an informed audience.
- (b) A resolution that simply calls for “reform,” “improvement,” “modification,” or the like without identifying a specific change to the status quo **does not** satisfy the threshold requirement. A bill that allocates funds without specifying a valid policy objective **does not** satisfy the threshold requirement.
- (c) Legislation that addresses frequently debated topics must be *especially* timely, significant, and/or novel, such that debate will necessarily focus on the particulars of the legislation and not the general issue. A list of suspect topics appears near the end of this manual.
- (d) Legislation that does not meet the above criteria or that is poorly written, inadequately researched, biased or prejudiced, vulgar or profane, or otherwise unsuitable for interscholastic debate **shall not** be considered at any FGCCFL tournament. Where possible, the League shall ask coaches to have unacceptable legislation rewritten.
- (e) Legislation that has been placed on the docket at an FGCCFL tournament (or that is strikingly similar to such legislation) **shall not** be entitled to consideration at any subsequent FGCCFL tournament but **may** be placed on the docket at the Tournament Coordinator’s discretion. A resolution rewritten as a bill (or vice versa) is a new item and may be considered.

§ 15 Template and Format Requirements

- (a) FGCCFL requires the use of the templates provided on the FGCCFL website. Other templates (including NCFL and NSDA) are NOT authorized. The templates may be edited in any application, but the finished product must be saved in Microsoft Word format. Legislation that is not submitted in the approved template, used as directed, **shall not** be considered at any FGCCFL tournament.
- (b) The templates **are not** “examples” to be replicated in a blank document. They have been designed to enable legislators to focus on the content rather than formatting. Simply open the template in a word processor, edit, and save. The highlighted guide text will help explain what is required and where it should go. Text that is not highlighted **should not** be changed without good cause.
- (c) Legislation must include a descriptive title, i.e., a title that would allow a casual observer to understand the intent of the legislation, and a “Respectfully submitted” closing block or line with the name of the author and school. The maximum length of an item of legislation is one side of a U.S. letter-size page **without** any changes to the template’s margins, spacing, or formatting.

§ 16 Content Guidance for Bills

- (a) **Overview.** A bill proposes a change in public policy and specifies how the federal government will implement the change. If enacted, bills carry the force of law. Bills do not explain *why* a course of action is desirable; rather, their focus is *how* the policy will be carried out.
- (b) Bills are to be written in the five-section format set forth in the template. No sections may be added or removed, but Sections 2 and 3 may be divided into subsections (A, B, etc.) as necessary.

- (c) **Section 1** states the change to be made or action to be taken in one sentence, or as briefly as possible. Provisions may not be incorporated by reference unless explained elsewhere in the bill. *It should be possible to understand the bill's intent from this section alone.*
- (d) **Section 2** clarifies terminology **actually used elsewhere in the bill** through definitions and through other provisions not related to the means of enforcement. Only essential provisions should be included; words and phrases used for their plain meaning or otherwise defined in relevant law need not be defined in the bill. **Remember:** Definitions in a bill are *prescriptive* (what X shall mean), not *descriptive* (what others say X means).
- (e) **Section 3** identifies the enforcing agency or agencies and provides a means of enforcement (penalties, funding, resolution of jurisdictional issues, etc.). **Both are required for the bill to have force.** Enforcing agencies **must** be federal agencies, almost always in the Executive Branch and usually at the Cabinet level.⁷ The Congress is **not** a proper enforcing agency.
- (f) Legislation addressing traditional state or local matters **must** resolve jurisdictional concerns. Some means of exercising federal authority must be specified in the bill; the legitimacy and feasibility of those means are issues that may be raised in floor debate.
- (g) **Section 4** establishes when the bill takes effect: immediately upon passage, a period of time (e.g., 90 days after passage), or a date certain (e.g., on January 1, 2025). **These are the only permissible formats for an effective date, and nothing else should appear in this section.**
- (h) **Section 5** declares that all laws in conflict with the bill are null and void, which is intended to prioritize the bill over current law. **This section's text must not be changed.**

§ 17 Content Guidance for Resolutions

- (a) **Overview.** A resolution expresses a conviction or makes a suggestion about a current issue. Resolutions do not carry the force of law; rather, passage means that the Congress endorses the position stated. In contrast to bills, resolutions explain *why* a position deserves official support, but not *how* the proposal shall be implemented.
- (b) All resolutions must be written in the simple resolution format incorporated in the FGCCFL template. This format consists of a series of one-sentence "*whereas*" clauses that state a basis for the resolution, followed by one or more one-sentence *resolving clauses* that state the proposal.
- (c) To be debatable, a resolution **must** state a specific suggestion and **may not** simply call for "reform," "improvement," "modification," etc. (Calling for repeal or reversal of an existing law or policy will generally be sufficient.) Moreover, a resolution may not simply call for passage of a particular bill, although it may call for adoption of the bill's policies (set forth in the resolving clauses).

⁷ *Note:* Independent agencies such as the Social Security Administration or specific legislative branch entities such as the Government Accountability Office may sometimes be appropriate enforcing bodies.

Additionally, if the bill confers a private right of action (allowing **private parties**, as opposed to a federal agency, to sue in federal court), the entirety of Section 3.A may be replaced by a declaration that "The federal courts shall have jurisdiction over all cases arising under the provisions of this bill." (This is one of the few occasions when the standard text may be changed.)

(d) Because resolutions do not carry the force of law, they may be directed toward federal, state, local, foreign, corporate, or other entities' conduct. The propriety of addressing a particular party is a legitimate issue to be raised in floor debate.

(e) **Constitutional amendments.** Because constitutional amendments do not carry the force of law unless ratified by the states, they are treated as resolutions. FGCCFL provides a special version of the simple resolution template for constitutional amendments which incorporates standard amendment language and formatting. In general, legislators need only add the text of their amendment to Section 1 (adding other sections if necessary); they may optionally change the ratification method from legislatures to conventions and/or modify or remove the seven-year ratification window. *Adoption of a constitutional amendment requires a two-thirds vote.*

Tournament Operations

§ 18 Submission and Review of Legislation

(a) Schools **must** submit at least one item of legislation to enter students in Congress.⁸ All Congress entries are waitlisted in Tabroom until an item of legislation is submitted from the school. Schools may submit up to six items, but not more than one item per student. ***All legislation must be personally reviewed by coaches and submitted via Tabroom.***

(b) **Optional advance review.** Legislation may be emailed to the Congress Coordinator before noon on the **Monday before tournament week** (11 days before the tournament). Legislation must be written using the FGCCFL template in the manner directed in § 15 of this manual, saved in Microsoft Word (.docx) format, and sent as an attachment (**not** as a link to cloud storage). **This does not submit the legislation for the tournament; this is ONLY for review.** The submitting coach will receive an reply within 48 hours detailing necessary repairs and suggested revisions.

(c) **Final submission.** To be considered for the tournament, legislation must be uploaded to Tabroom no later than 9:00 PM on the **Thursday before tournament week** (9 days before the tournament). Legislation must be written using the FGCCFL template in the manner directed in § 15 of this manual and saved in Microsoft Word (.docx) format, one item per document. **Legislation that does not satisfy these requirements will receive no further consideration.**

(d) **Standard of review.** Legislation will be reviewed to ensure that it meets the requirements of §§ 14-17 of this manual. This includes appropriate subject matter, proper use of the template, and the inclusion of all required elements of a bill or resolution. Legislation that does not meet these requirements **will not** be placed on the docket.

Legislation will not be excluded *solely* because it is unconstitutional, unworkable, or ill-advised. These are legitimate issues to be addressed in floor debate. *The inclusion of an item on the docket does not constitute a "clean bill of health" from the Congress Coordinator!*

⁸ The Congress Coordinator may waive this requirement for early tournaments and on a case-by-case basis where schools have been unable to submit legislation despite demonstrated efforts to do so.

Sample Bill

**NOTE: Use of the FGCCFL legislation template is required.
DO NOT ATTEMPT TO REPRODUCE THIS FORMAT IN A BLANK DOCUMENT.**

A Bill to Require Immediate Disclosure of Campaign Contributions

1 BE IT ENACTED BY THE STUDENT CONGRESS HERE ASSEMBLED THAT:

2 **SECTION 1.** Political committees shall be required to report and publish all contributions
3 received to the Federal Election Commission within 72 hours of receipt.

4 **SECTION 2.** A. As used herein, “political committees” shall include all political action
5 committees, campaign committees, and any other type of organization currently in
6 existence or created in the future whose purpose is to influence the outcome of a
7 congressional or presidential election.

8 B. The form and method of reporting and publication shall be determined by the
9 Federal Election Commission, but said report must include, at minimum, the
10 value of the contribution and the donor’s name and ZIP code.

11 **SECTION 3.** A. The Federal Election Commission shall be responsible for enforcing the
12 provisions of this bill.

13 B. Failure to disclose a contribution within 72 hours of receipt shall be punishable
14 by a fine of three times the amount of the undisclosed contribution.

15 **SECTION 4.** The provisions of this bill shall take effect 90 days after passage.

16 **SECTION 5.** All laws in conflict with this legislation are hereby declared null and void.

Respectfully submitted,

*Josh Schneider
Pine Meadow High School*

Sample Resolution

**NOTE: Use of the FGCCFL legislation template is required.
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A Resolution to Abolish the Debt Ceiling

1 **WHEREAS,** The United States is the only developed nation that imposes an arbitrary
2 borrowing limit on itself; and

3 **WHEREAS,** The nature of the debt ceiling makes it possible for one faction in the Congress to
4 hold the rest of the government hostage; and

5 **WHEREAS,** The debt ceiling conflicts with federal spending bills, creating the potential for
6 recurring crises; and

7 **WHEREAS,** The absence of a debt ceiling would not result in a debt crisis, as is obvious from
8 the low yields on U.S. Treasury securities; now, therefore, be it

9 **RESOLVED,** That the Student Congress here assembled calls for the federal debt ceiling to be
10 abolished; and be it

11 **FURTHER RESOLVED,** that any borrowing necessary to execute spending legislation adopted
12 by the Congress be deemed authorized upon passage of such legislation.

Respectfully submitted,

*Sandy Grenner
Mercer Academy*

Sample Constitutional Amendment

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A Resolution to Propose a Constitutional Amendment to Protect the Right to Vote

1 **WHEREAS,** It is axiomatic that a republican form of government demands zealous protection
2 of the people's right to choose who exercises power on their behalf; and

3 **WHEREAS,** The right to vote, while presumed by the Constitution, is not explicitly protected
4 except with respect to race, sex, and age; and

5 **WHEREAS,** Public officials have imposed arbitrary and often discriminatory restrictions on
6 the right to vote; now, therefore, be it

7 **RESOLVED,** By two-thirds of the Congress here assembled, that the following article is
8 proposed as an amendment to the Constitution of the United States, which shall be
9 valid to all intents and purposes as part of the Constitution when ratified by
10 conventions in three-fourths of the several states within seven years from the date
11 of its submission by the Congress:

12 **ARTICLE --.**

13 **SECTION 1:** The right of citizens of the United States, who are eighteen years
14 of age or older, to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the
15 United States or by any State.

16 **SECTION 2:** The Congress shall have power to enforce this article by
17 appropriate legislation.

Respectfully submitted,

*Adrian Kanat
Southgranite High School*

List of Suspect Legislation Topics

This is NOT a list of prohibited topics.

*It IS an admonition to **be careful, be thoughtful, and be creative.***

It has been the experience of the League that legislation on the topics below tends to lead to debate of poor quality and/or frequent use of canned speeches, so legislation on these topics will be held to a higher standard of timeliness, significance, and originality.

- Legalize marijuana
- Legalize euthanasia/medically assisted dying
- Legalize prostitution/sex work
- Ban firearms/handguns
- Ban/protect abortion
- Ban/protect contraception
- Ban/protect same-sex marriage
- Abolish capital punishment
- Abolish the Electoral College
- Abolish birthright citizenship
- Eliminate the penny
- Replace dollar bill with coin
- Raise/lower voting age
- Raise/lower drinking age
- Change school start times (or similar)
- Abolish standardized testing
- Provide aid to a specific foreign country