HMDC Forensics Presents...
MODEL CONGRESS
(FALL 2024)

What We Will Discuss (Today)

Here is the agenda for today's lesson...

Introduction to the Class

Understanding Government (General)

Understanding the US Government (Specific)

Break

Activity: Allowing Pets in Restaurants (& Hotels)

Activity: Solving "World" Problems (Not on Earth!)

Welcome to HMDC Model Congress

In this class, we will learn how government works by participating in learning and activities that will reinforce the Model Congress experience (or similar experiences). This will help us build skills like speaking confidently, thinking critically, and working well with others.

Deeper Learning About Government

An Opportunity for Skill Development

Preparation for the Future

Deeper Learning About Government

In this course, we will gain a deeper understanding of how government works by engaging in activities that mirror real government processes. This knowledge will help us better understand how laws are made and how decisions impact our daily lives.

Real-world application: We will explore how laws and policies are created, debated, and passed in real governments, helping us understand the importance of decision-making in shaping society.

Civic engagement: Learning about government helps us become active citizens by teaching us how we can participate in our communities and influence change through informed action.

Critical thinking: Understanding government improves our ability to analyze complex problems, evaluate different viewpoints, and develop meaningful solutions to some of the important issues our communities are facing.

Opportunity for Skill Development

An Opportunity for Skill Development
This course offers a unique opportunity to develop essential skills that will help us succeed in school, future careers, and everyday life. Through Model Congress, we will practice public speaking, collaboration, and problem-solving.

Public speaking: We will learn to speak confidently in front of others, improving our ability to express ideas clearly and persuasively in both formal debates and casual discussions.

Collaboration: Working with others teaches us how to negotiate and to compromise, helping us develop stronger teamwork skills and learn to respect diverse perspectives.

Problem-solving: By debating and discussing important issues, we sharpen our problem-solving abilities, allowing us to think more critically and creatively when facing challenges.

Preparation for the Future

Preparation for the Future
The skills and knowledge we develop in this class will prepare us for future success, not just in school but in many aspects of life. We will be better equipped to take on leadership roles, engage in meaningful discussions, and make informed decisions.

Improved Leadership Skills: By participating in debates and simulations, we develop leadership skills that will help us guide discussions, make decisions, and motivate others to take action.

Enhanced Decision-Making: Learning how laws are made and policies are shaped prepares us to make informed decisions in real-life situations, whether in school or in our communities.

Effective Communication Skills: Through practice, we learn to communicate our ideas clearly and persuasively, a skill that benefits us in school projects, future careers, and everyday interactions.

Preparing for Upcoming Events

Throughout the course, students will have opportunities to compete in Model Congress simulations. These events will test your skills in debate, collaboration, and leadership.

End-of-Class Simulation: Participate in a full simulation to practice the skills learned during the course. We will act as lawmakers, debate key issues, and vote on proposed laws. This experience will help us strengthen our public speaking and negotiation skills.

Harvard Model Congress: Compete with students in a prestigious international event run by Harvard University. This competition allows us to engage in high-level simulations while developing leadership and critical thinking skills alongside peers from different regions.

Future Competitions: Build our research, speaking, and teamwork skills for future Model Congress events. By sharpening these abilities, we will be better prepared for upcoming competitions and debates, by attending both national and international events.

Harvard Model Congress

Harvard Model Congress (HMC) is the largest and oldest government simulation conference run entirely by students from Harvard University. It gives middle and high school students a unique opportunity to experience real-world government processes.

Enjoy a Comprehensive Experience: Students participate in debates and discussions on real-world policies, simulating the roles of lawmakers in the U.S. government.

Attend a Prestigious Event: Participants collaborate with Harvard students and peers from across the U.S. and other countries, gaining exposure to diverse perspectives.

Development of Leadership Skills: The event fosters leadership by encouraging critical thinking, improving decision-making, and building confidence in leading group discussions.

Understanding Government

In this section, we will explore the role, structure, and types of government, along with how governments make decisions for their citizens. We need to understand government and the history to appreciate how it works today.

What is a Government?

What is its Purpose?

What are the Common Types?

What is a Government?

A government is a system that makes rules, keeps people safe, and helps a community, city, or country run smoothly. It works by creating laws, making sure people follow them, and helping solve problems in society.

Authority and Control: Governments have the power to make rules and enforce them, which helps keep people safe and maintain order. Without these rules, it would be hard for everyone to live together peacefully.

Structured Organization: Governments are often divided into parts, with different jobs like making laws, making sure laws are followed, and deciding what happens when someone breaks a law. This makes sure decisions are made fairly.

Representation and Leadership: Most governments have leaders who are chosen by the people or appointed to represent their interests. These leaders help make important decisions that affect everyone in the community or country.

Purpose of Government

The purpose of government is to help people live safely and peacefully by making rules, protecting rights, and providing services that everyone needs. Governments work to improve life for all citizens and solve problems that affect the community.

Protecting Rights: Governments make sure that people's basic rights—like freedom of speech and the right to own property—are protected. They create laws to stop unfair treatment and help make sure everyone is treated equally.

Providing Services: Governments provide important services that people use every day, like schools, roads, hospitals, and emergency services. These services help make life better and safer for everyone in the community.

Maintaining Order: Governments help keep communities peaceful by making laws that prevent crime and resolving conflicts when they happen. By enforcing laws, governments make sure that people can live and work together in a safe and fair way.

Types of Government

There are different types of government around the world, and each one has its own way of making decisions and sharing power. Understanding these types helps us see how countries are organized and how they make rules.

Monarchy: A monarchy is a government where a king or queen is in charge. In some monarchies, the ruler has total power, while in others, the king or queen shares power with elected leaders.

Dictatorship: A dictatorship is a government where one person has all the power. The leader usually stays in control by using force and does not allow people to disagree or have much freedom.

Democracy: In a democracy, the people have the power. They elect leaders to make decisions and create laws. In a democracy, everyone's vote counts, and citizens have a say in how the government is run.

Understanding Democracy

In this section, we will explore the basics of democracy and its importance in Model Congress. Learning about different democratic systems will help us prepare for representing viewpoints and making decisions in Model Congress events.

What is Democracy?

Types of Democratic Governments

Parliamentary vs. Representative Republic

What is a Democracy?

Democracy is a system of government where the power belongs to the people. In this system, citizens have the right to choose their leaders and influence decisions through voting and active participation, which allows everyone to have a voice in how their government operates.

Power of the People: In a democracy, citizens hold the ultimate power by electing leaders who represent their interests. This means that the people, not a king or dictator, decide who will lead and make decisions for the community. By voting in elections, citizens help shape the laws and policies that affect their daily lives.

Protection of Rights and Freedoms: One of the most important features of democracy is that it protects the basic rights of individuals, such as freedom of speech, religion, and the right to a fair trial. These rights are guaranteed by laws and constitutions, which ensure that no one's rights can be taken away without just cause.

Public Participation in Decisions: In a democracy, citizens are encouraged to be actively involved in their government beyond just voting. People can express their views by attending public meetings, engaging in debates, or even running for office. This participation helps ensure that the government responds to the needs and desires of the people it serves.

Types of Democratic Governments

There are different types of democracies, each with its own way of allowing citizens to participate in decision-making and choose their leaders. Understanding these types helps us see how countries organize their governments to ensure fairness and representation.

Direct Democracy: In a direct democracy, citizens make decisions themselves by voting on laws and policies directly, rather than electing representatives to do it for them. This type of democracy is rare today but is used in smaller communities or organizations where people can gather to vote on important issues.

Representative Democracy: In a representative democracy, citizens elect leaders to represent their interests and make decisions on their behalf. This system is common in larger countries, like the United States, where it would be impractical for everyone to vote on every issue, so elected representatives handle this responsibility.

Constitutional Democracy: A constitutional democracy has a governing document, like the U.S. Constitution, that limits the power of government and guarantees individual rights. In this type of system, elected leaders must follow the rules set by the constitution, ensuring that the rights of citizens are protected even when laws are being made.

Parliamentary vs. Representative Republic

Parliamentary and representative republic governments are two common forms of democratic systems, but they differ in how they distribute power and organize leadership. Understanding these differences helps us see how power and decision-making vary between countries.

Parliamentary System: In a parliamentary system, the executive branch (the leader of the government) is directly chosen by the legislative branch, usually from the majority party. This means that the prime minister or leader is part of the legislature, and they work closely with elected lawmakers to create and pass laws.

Representative Republic: In a representative republic, like the United States, the executive branch (the president) is elected separately from the legislature by the citizens. This separation of powers means that the president and lawmakers have distinct roles, and they must work together to create laws, but neither has full control over the other.

Key Differences: In a parliamentary system, the executive and legislative branches are more connected, often leading to quicker decision-making. In a representative republic, the separation of powers provides checks and balances, ensuring that no one branch becomes too powerful.

Understanding the U.S. Government

In this section, we will explore how the U.S. government is organized and operates, which will help us understand the roles we will play in Model Congress. By learning how power is divided between branches, we will know how to introduce, debate, and pass laws in a way that mirrors real government processes, ensuring that we can effectively participate in Model Congress simulations.

A Constitutional Democracy

The Three Branches of Government

An Overview of the Legislative Process

A Constitutional Democracy

The U.S. is a constitutional democracy, which means the government is based on a written set of rules (the Constitution) and derives its power from the people. This system ensures that the government remains accountable to its citizens and operates within clearly defined limits.

People's Authority: In a constitutional democracy, the ultimate power lies with the citizens, who elect their leaders to represent their interests. This ensures that the government reflects the will of the people and that leaders can be held accountable through elections.

Limits on Power: The Constitution clearly defines the powers and responsibilities of each branch of government, preventing any one branch or leader from gaining too much control. This creates a system where power is shared and checked by other parts of the government.

Protection of Rights: The Constitution guarantees certain fundamental rights to all citizens, such as freedom of speech, religion, and the right to a fair trial. These rights cannot be easily taken away, ensuring that the government cannot abuse its power over individuals.

Three Branches of Government

The U.S. government is divided into three branches: the legislative, executive, and judicial branches. This system of separation of powers ensures that no single branch becomes too powerful, and each has its own distinct responsibilities.

Legislative Branch: The legislative branch, made up of Congress (the House of Representatives and the Senate), is responsible for creating laws. It debates proposed laws (bills), makes changes, and votes on whether they should become law. Congress also controls government spending and has the power to declare war.

Executive Branch: The executive branch is led by the President, who is responsible for enforcing laws passed by Congress. The President also oversees the military, manages foreign relations, and has the power to veto laws they disagree with. However, Congress can override a veto with enough votes.

Judicial Branch: The judicial branch, led by the Supreme Court, interprets laws and determines if they align with the Constitution. This branch acts as a check on the other two by ruling on whether laws or actions taken by the government are legal and constitutional.
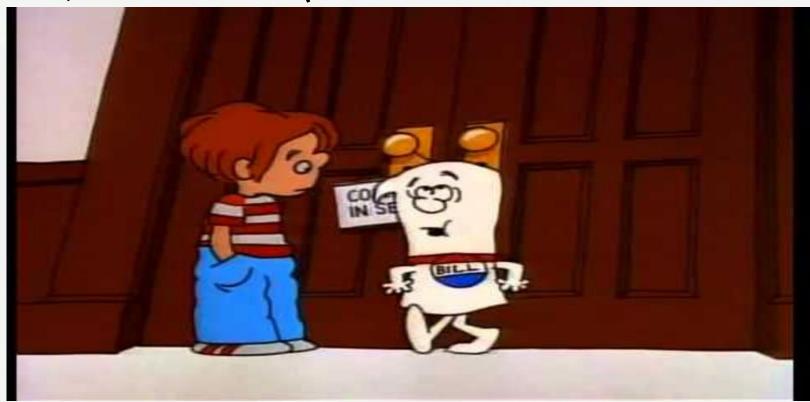
Overview of the Legislative Process

In the U.S. government, a bill must go through several steps, from introduction to approval by different parts of the government, before it can become a law. Understanding this legislative process is crucial for Model Congress, where mastering these steps will help us effectively introduce, debate, and pass bills during simulations.

Introducing a Bill: A bill, starts when someone in Congress, either in the House of Representatives or the Senate, introduces an idea for a new law. After it's introduced, the bill is debated, and changes may be made to improve it before a vote. (Bill = is simply an idea for making a new law)

Approval by Both Houses: The bill must be approved by both the House of Representatives and the Senate. It needs a majority vote in each to move forward. If either house votes no, the bill doesn't move on to the next step.

Signed or Vetoed by the President: Once both houses approve the bill, it is sent to the President. The President can sign the bill to make it a law or veto it, which sends it back to Congress. If vetoed, Congress can still pass the bill with a two-thirds vote.

"I'm Just a Bill" (Schoolhouse Rock, 1975)

Download (WeTransfer): https://we.tl/t-qC6JgPYL4z

Break Time (~10 min)

During/After the break...

1. Try to remember how a law is made (from the video)

2. Be prepared to discuss this in class when we return

3. After the break we will do the "Allowing Pets in Restaurants" activity