HMDC MODEL CONGRESS (FALL 2024, Week 10)

What We Will Discuss (Today)

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

Review of the Homework (ex. Activity for the Simulation)

Brief Review of Model Congress Process

Activity: A Simulation of the US Government (Legislative)

Reviewing the Homework (No Quiz)

PLEASE REVIEW THE ACTIVITY AS A GROUP

1. What is a political party? [Discuss (Briefly)]

2. What is a committee? How is it different than the "floor"?

3. How does a Bill become a law? [Discuss (Briefly)]

What We Will Discuss (Today)

1. We review the legislative process

2. We review the rules of order

3. We discuss the Bill writing and Committees

    - What committees do we want for the event?

Bill Writing Essentials

Effective bills require careful planning, thorough research, and precise writing. Authors must follow strict formatting requirements while clearly explaining complex solutions to difficult problems.

• Problem Documentation Standards: Bills must present statistical evidence showing the problem's scope, explain previous failed solution attempts, document who the problem affects, and demonstrate why government action is necessary now.

• Solution Framework Development: Authors must detail exactly what changes their bill makes, which agencies will implement each part, how implementation will be monitored, and what specific results they expect to achieve.

• Cost Analysis Requirements: Every bill needs comprehensive budget details including exact implementation costs, ongoing operational expenses, funding sources, and contingency plans if costs exceed estimates.

Required Bill Sections

Bills must contain specific sections in a required order to receive consideration. Each section serves a distinct purpose in explaining how the proposed law will function.

• Findings and Purpose Structure: The opening sections must present compelling evidence of the problem, explain why current laws are inadequate, and clearly state how the bill's changes will improve the situation.

• Implementation Authority Guidelines: Bills must specify which agencies have authority to make changes, what specific powers they receive, how they coordinate with other agencies, and what oversight ensures proper execution.

• Evaluation and Reporting Standards: Authors must include specific metrics to measure success, require regular progress reports, establish review periods to assess effectiveness, and provide methods to correct implementation problems.

Legislative Writing Standards

Professional legislative writing follows strict rules to ensure clarity and prevent misinterpretation. Authors must master these standards to write effective bills.

• Language Precision Requirements: Bills must use legally precise terms, define all technical language, maintain consistent wording throughout, and eliminate any ambiguous or unclear phrases that could cause confusion.

• Section Organization Protocol: Content must be organized into clearly numbered sections and subsections, with proper hierarchical structure, clear cross-references, and logical progression of ideas.

• Legal Citation Standards: References to existing laws must use proper legal citations, accurately quote amended sections, clearly show what language changes, and maintain consistency with current law.

The Legislative Process

Model Congress members must master the complex steps of lawmaking. Each bill follows a strict path from idea to law, requiring careful attention to rules and procedures at every stage.

• Initial Research Process: After identifying a serious community problem, Representatives must gather statistical evidence, research similar laws in other places, interview affected citizens, and write a comprehensive bill that details both the problem and a workable solution.

• Expert Committee Phase: Committees spend multiple sessions examining each bill's language, questioning authors about specific details, debating possible improvements, and working through amendments before deciding if the bill is strong enough to move forward.

• Full Chamber Consideration: During floor debate, bill authors present evidence supporting their solution, field challenging questions from opponents, manage their limited speaking time effectively, and work to secure enough votes for passage.

Committee Structure

Congressional committees function as specialized working groups with specific subject expertise. Committees follow strict procedures to ensure thorough and fair consideration of every bill they review.

• Committee Leadership Structure: The chairperson controls all discussion using Robert's Rules of Order, recognizes speakers in a fair order, manages debate time effectively, and ensures proper voting procedures on all motions and amendments.

• Member Responsibility Requirements: Committee members must read every bill before meetings, prepare relevant questions about implementation and costs, suggest specific improvements through formal amendments, and vote based on careful analysis rather than personal preference.

• Amendment Development Standards: Members wanting to change bills must write exact amendment language, explain how changes improve the bill, secure support from other members, and guide their amendment through the formal voting process.

Floor Debate Rules

The full chamber operates under strict parliamentary procedure to ensure fair and orderly debate. Every member must understand and follow these formal rules to participate effectively.

• Speaker Recognition Protocol: Members must stand, address the chair properly, wait for formal recognition, and yield the floor when time expires - failing to follow these steps results in losing speaking privileges.

• Debate Time Management: Each bill receives one hour of total debate time, divided equally between supporters and opponents, with party leaders responsible for assigning speakers and monitoring remaining time.

• Parliamentary Motion Procedure: Members must understand how to make proper motions, when each type of motion is appropriate, what rights and privileges different motions provide, and how to challenge improper rulings or procedures.

Committee Operations

Committees follow specific procedures to efficiently review bills and suggest improvements. These procedures ensure thorough consideration while maintaining orderly discussion.

• Meeting Administration Structure: Chairs must follow a strict agenda, maintain proper minutes, record all votes accurately, and ensure compliance with all parliamentary rules throughout each meeting.

• Member Participation Guidelines: Representatives must focus comments on the current bill, maintain professional conduct, respect time limits, and work constructively to improve legislation rather than simply oppose it.

• Amendment Processing Requirements: All proposed changes must be submitted in writing, distributed to members before discussion, considered in proper order, and voted on individually before final bill consideration.

Amendment Procedures

Amendments allow committees to improve bills through careful modification. Every change must follow specific procedures to ensure proper consideration.

• Amendment Proposal Format: Changes must specify exact words to add, delete, or modify; identify precise locations for changes; explain the purpose of each modification; and show how changes improve the bill.

• Supporting Evidence Requirements: Members proposing changes must present research supporting their amendments, explain why changes are necessary, address potential implementation issues, and respond to concerns from other members.

• Voting Process Structure: Committees vote on amendments in a specific order, consider alternatives when appropriate, maintain clear records of all changes, and ensure approved modifications are properly incorporated into the final bill.

Committee Voting System

Formal voting procedures ensure accurate recording of decisions and fair treatment of all proposals. Every vote must follow specific steps to maintain proper records.

• Vote Initiation Protocol: Chairs must clearly state the question being voted on, ensure all members understand the proposal, allow final discussion when appropriate, and formally call for the vote using proper parliamentary language.

• Member Voting Requirements: Representatives must be present to vote, respond clearly when called, understand the implications of their vote, and ensure their vote is properly recorded in official records.

• Result Documentation Standards: Committee secretaries must record exact vote totals, note which members voted each way, maintain records of all decided questions, and prepare proper reports for chamber leadership.

Managing Floor Amendments

Floor amendments allow last-minute improvements to bills but face strict limitations. The Speaker controls what amendments are considered and in what order they receive votes.

• Amendment Submission Rules: Members must submit floor amendments in writing before debate begins, demonstrate how changes improve the bill, secure support from their party leadership, and accept that not all amendments will receive consideration.

• Debate Time Allocation: Each amendment receives twenty minutes of debate divided equally between supporters and opponents, with amendment authors speaking first to explain their proposed changes and their expected impact.

• Modification Voting Sequence: The House votes on amendments in the order determined by the Speaker, with each vote requiring a clear majority, and approved changes immediately incorporating into the bill before final passage voting.

Final Passage Procedures

Bills face their final test during passage votes where all Representatives decide their fate. This formal process follows specific steps to ensure accurate recording of each member's position.

• Pre-Vote Speech Requirements: Bill authors make final arguments for passage, opposition leaders present closing arguments against, and party leaders make formal recommendations to their members about supporting or opposing the bill.

• Roll Call Process: The clerk calls each Representative's name alphabetically, members vote "aye" or "nay" in a clear voice, the clerk records each vote, and the Speaker announces final totals after all members have voted.

• Result Implementation Standards: Bills receiving majority support move forward in the legislative process, while failed bills return to their authors who must decide whether to revise and resubmit or abandon their proposals.

Floor Presentation Process

When bills reach the House floor, they follow a precise order of presentation and discussion. Every bill must go through specific introduction steps before debate can begin.

• Leadership Introduction Protocol: The Speaker announces the bill by title, directs the clerk to read the committee report, and recognizes the committee chair who explains why the committee recommends passage based on their detailed review.

• Sponsor Presentation Requirements: The bill's author delivers the opening speech explaining the problem and solution, handles initial questions from other members about how the bill works, and reserves time for a final closing argument.

• Initial Question Management: Members seeking to ask questions must be recognized by the chair, wait for the sponsor to yield, ask clear and specific questions about the bill, and accept when the sponsor chooses not to yield further time.

Floor Debate Structure

After initial presentations, the House follows strict time management rules for full debate. Each side receives equal time to present their arguments for and against the bill.

• Time Distribution System: Party leaders receive equal blocks of debate time, record which members wish to speak, assign specific minutes to each speaker, and ensure their total time allocation isn't exceeded during the debate.

• Speaker Recognition Procedure: Members must stand and address the chair, state their purpose (speaking for/against or offering amendments), wait for formal recognition, and yield back any unused time to their party's time pool.

• Amendment Consideration Rules: Members proposing changes must submit amendments in writing, explain how changes improve the bill, accept questions about their modifications, and secure majority support through separate amendment votes.

Final Voting Methods

The House uses specific voting procedures to record member positions and determine bill passage. Every vote follows the same structured process to ensure accuracy.

• Pre-Vote Speech Requirements: Bill sponsors deliver closing arguments supporting passage, opposition leaders present final objections, and party leaders make formal recommendations to their members before voting begins.

• Vote Recording Process: The clerk calls each member's name alphabetically, records their "aye" or "nay" votes clearly in the official record, maintains an accurate running total, and announces final results to the chamber.

• Outcome Implementation Standards: Bills receiving majority support advance in the legislative process, while defeated bills cannot be considered again without substantial revision and resubmission through committee.

Basic Parliamentary Procedure

Model Congress uses simplified Robert's Rules to maintain order and fairness. Understanding these basic procedures is essential for participating in both committee meetings and floor sessions.

• Recognition and Speaking: Members must stand or raise their hand, address the chair as "Mr./Madam Chair/Speaker," wait to be recognized before speaking, and always direct their comments through the chair rather than directly to other members.

• Motion Making Process: Members begin motions by saying "I move to…" followed by their specific request, wait for another member to "second" their motion, and understand that discussion cannot begin until both steps are completed.

• Voting Order Standards: The chair must take votes in the correct sequence - first on amendments to motions, then on the main motion, allowing members to clearly voice their "aye" or "nay" votes, and announcing results before moving forward.

Essential Meeting Motions

Certain motions are used frequently during Model Congress sessions. Members must understand when and how to use these common motions effectively.

• Procedural Motion Requirements: Common motions like "moving the previous question" (ending debate), "requesting a roll call vote" (recording individual votes), or "moving to recess" (taking a break) require proper phrasing and appropriate timing.

• Amendment Motion Structure: Members must state "I move to amend by…" followed by adding, striking, or substituting specific words, ensuring their amendment is germane (related) to the current topic, and accepting that only one amendment can be considered at a time.

• Point of Order Usage: Members may interrupt by stating "Point of Order" when rules are broken, must explain which rule was violated when recognized, and accept the chair's ruling without argument once it is made.

Advanced Parliamentary Tools

More complex parliamentary tools help manage difficult situations. These tools require careful timing and proper procedure to be effective.

• Postponement Motion Options: Members can move to "postpone definitely" (delay until a specific time), "refer back to committee" (return for more work), or "table" (set aside indefinitely), but must explain their reasons and secure majority support.

• Division Request Procedure: Any member may call "Division" after a voice vote if the result seems unclear, requiring the chair to take a standing vote where members stand to show their position, ensuring accurate count of supporters and opponents.

• Appeal Process Guidelines: Members may "appeal the decision of the chair" when disagreeing with rulings, must explain their reasons for appealing, allow the chair to defend the ruling, and accept the majority's vote on whether the ruling stands.

Break Time (~10 min)

During/After the break...

1. Review the Activity = See Homework Page!

2. Write an Outline (Bill)= Think of an Idea for a Bill.

3. After the break: Dividing into Groups (Bill Writing & Committees)