

# Congress at Work



**THE LEGISLATIVE  
PROCESS**

# Define the Steps of the Legislative Process



- Distribute to each group both pages of the handout *Congress at Work: The Legislative Process* and a set of the *Process Cards*.
- *The handout is an outline of 12-steps in the legislative process with a basic description of each step.*
- *Each Process Card contains a randomly lettered statement of a step in the legislative process. Groups should read each Process Card and then match it to the appropriate step on the handout by placing the card on top of the correct step.*
- *After they have matched all the cards, students should use Worksheet 1 or a sheet of notebook paper numbered 1-12 to record their answers (students should write the letter of each Process Card or Cards next to the number of the corresponding step).*
- *When all groups have finished, review as a class to make sure the answers are correct and the students understand the legislative process before moving to the next activity.*

# Demonstrate the Legislative Process in Action



- Students will use their understanding of the legislative process to analyze documents that were created or received by Congress as Congress drafted legislation.
- Groups of students will examine 18 documents in random order to determine at which step in the process each was created.
- Students should read each document carefully and look for clues to determine what action is illustrated in the document.
- Students will then match each document to the Process Card which describes the action taking place in the document.
- Groups should take 2-3 documents at a time from the 18 document set and continue to switch until they have seen and matched all documents. If students have trouble determining the appropriate step illustrated by a particular document, encourage them to continue with other documents and return later to the difficult one.
- Students should mark *Worksheet 1* with the numbered document that matches each of the 12 steps. When all groups have finished, hold a class discussion to check for understanding and to discuss any documents students found difficult.

# Reflection Questions



- 3-6% of bills introduced in Congress become law. Is this passage rate good or bad? Why?
- Members of Congress know that a bill they introduce has a very small chance of passing. Why do they do it anyway?
- What purpose is served by introducing a bill?
- To what extent is each step of the process an opportunity for elected officials to represent the interests of their constituents?
- How does the legislative process enable the House and Senate to test ideas before they become law?

# Reflection Questions



- How does the process by which legislation is made affect its outcome?
- What do the documents studied in this lesson show about how citizens can affect the legislative process?
- What do you think the public does not know but should learn about how Congress works?
- What features of the legislative process do you think should be preserved?
- What features should be changed?
- In what way does understanding the legislative process factor into voters' opinions in favor of or against incumbent candidates?

## Extension



- To extend the lesson, have students explore the historical background of one of the documents used in this lesson. Students can investigate the historical context and events that led to the legislation being proposed or find out more about which part of the legislative action the document represents. Alternately, students can learn more about Congress as a representative institution by further researching the step of the process illustrated by the documents.