

Congressional Roleplay

- **Discuss political affiliations and assess your own.**
- **Review the bills, discuss who would likely support each.**
- **Take stock of personal identity (begin journal writing):**
 - Which bill am I sponsoring?
 - Which bills do I personally support?
 - Which bills would my constituents want me to support?
 - Which bills would my campaign contributors want me to support?
 - Which bills would my party want me to support?
- **Hold Party Caucuses:**
 - Elect party leader and whip. These leaders are responsible for ensuring that the party meets its goals. The leader and whip help Congressmen and women gather support for their own bills (assuming the bills are consistent with party philosophy) and work for good communication among the representatives in their party.
 - Vote on official, public stands that the party will take on two of the bills. Taking a stand on an issue and succeeding in making it happen makes the party look strong and powerful and attracts campaign contributions. Taking a stand and not succeeding in making it happen makes the party look weak in the eyes of the public.
- **Press Conferences**
 - The party leader and whip hold news conferences announcing to the American public the stands their party has chosen to take.
- **Explain floor debate system:**
 - For the sake of simplicity, we will assume the bills have already made it out of committee. We begin our roleplay at the point where the bills are just entering floor debate.

First Reading:

Bills are debated. Any representative may ask to be recognized by the Speaker of the House (Mr. Calker) to speak during the debate. The Speaker has sole discretion as to who is recognized to speak. As the Speaker represents the majority party, sometimes that party gets favored. During the debate, you can try to convince people to vote for a bill, reveal your own stance on a bill (or keep it secret-- if that fits your strategy better) or simply drop sound bites for the media back home. Remember that the Representatives who speak during floor debates are seen as more influential and active in the eyes of the sponsors and voters back home.

Second Reading:

Bills are again debated. Representatives have the same goals as in the first debate. There is also one major difference. **The Second Reading is the one and only time when representatives can propose amendments to the bills!** When a Congressman/ woman proposes an amendment (change) to the bill, there is an immediate vote. If the majority (50% +1) of representatives vote

“up” (for the amendment), the bill is changed, and this change is permanent unless there is another amendment approved that changes the bill back.

Some amendment strategy: Amendments can be proposed in order to get more people to vote for the bill, but they can also be proposed to sabotage a bill and get people to vote against it. This is sometimes great strategy, and sometimes it backfires (on Strom Thurmond for example). Also, an amendment does not have to pertain to the bill **in any way whatsoever** (for example, midnight basketball...)

Third Reading:

Bills are again debated. The final 20 minutes of class will be reserved for the formal, final voting on the bills, so the third reading will be shorter than the first two.

- **Review grading criteria for Congressional Roleplay:**
 - 80% of your roleplay grade will be determined by the grade you earn on your journal. Please use the journal-writing guidelines and grading rubric in your packet for instructions on how to write your journal. Journal lengths should average one written page a day; for example if our roleplay lasts 10 days, you are responsible for writing about 10 pages. The first day you wrote in your journal was the first day of the roleplay. The day we hold our final votes is the last. Please count days to determine how long your journal should be when you hand it in.
 - It is also a requirement to write every day. Good Congressmen and women communicate with colleagues, try to make deals, think about possible amendments and strategy, react to the public data, analyze their sponsors' wishes, and plan with their parties every day. You are expected to be active every day. Through our roleplay, you may skip one day writing in your journal, but only one. **Each entry in your journal must be dated accurately for you to earn credit for the entry!**
 - 20% of your roleplay grade will be determined by your success in meeting **3 of the 4** following criteria:
 - getting the bill you are sponsoring passed.
 - pleasing your constituents back home.
 - pleasing your campaign contributor.
 - pleasing your party.

Your main goal as a Congressman-woman, is to get re-elected; if you fail in more than one of these four aspects, you will not have enough support/publicity/influence to get re-elected. **In your final journal entry, (after the third reading and final vote on the bills) you are responsible for making your case to me that you have succeeded in meeting at least 3 of these 4 criteria.** Even if you think you have failed in more than one, make your best case to me for why, for example, even though you had to vote against that bill that the people home wanted badly, you still pleased them anyway.

Please also note that being a party leader or whip brings with it extra influence power, and visibility. Assuming the leader/whip has met the responsibilities of that job, the leader/whip must only complete 2 of the 4 goals to get re-elected.

Identities (33) - 17 Democrats, 16 Republicans

**1. State: Texas
Party: Republican
Campaign Contributors: Citizens For Low Taxes**

**2. State: Texas
Party: Democrat
Campaign Contributors: National Sierra Club**

**3. State: Texas
Party: Republican
Campaign Contributors: Citizens For Low Taxes**

**4. State: texas
Party: Democrat
Campaign Contributors: National Sierra Club**

**5. State: Nebraska
Party: Republican
Campaign Contributors: Citizens For Low Taxes**

**6. State: Oklahoma
Party: Democrat
Campaign Contributors: National Sierra Club**

**7. State: Illinois
Party: Republican
Campaign Contributors: Citizens For Low Taxes**

**8. State: Tennessee
Party: Democrat
Campaign Contributors: Mobil Oil Company**

**9. State: Maine
Party: Democrat
Campaign Contributors: Citizens For Low Taxes**

**10. State: Massachusetts
Party: Democrat
Campaign Contributors: No More Nukes International**

**11. State: Florida
Party: Republican
Campaign Contributors: Mobil Oil Company**

**12. State: Virginia
Party: Democrat
Campaign Contributors: No More Nukes International**

13. State: Utah
Party: Republican
Campaign Contributors: Citizens For Low Taxes

14. State: Colorado
Party: Democrat
Campaign Contributors: No More Nukes International

15. State: Vermont
Party: Republican
Campaign Contributors: Citizens For Low Taxes

16. State: Texas
Party: Republican
Campaign Contributors: Citizens For Low Taxes

17. State: California
Party: Republican
Campaign Contributors: Citizens For Low Taxes

18. State: Oregon
Party: Democrat
Campaign Contributors: National Sierra Club

19. State: Washington
Party: Republican
Campaign Contributors: Citizens For Low Taxes

20. State: Washington
Party: Democrat
Campaign Contributors: Mobil Oil Company

21. State: new York
Party: Republican
Campaign Contributors: Citizens For Low Taxes

22. State: New York
Party: Democrat
Campaign Contributors: Mobil Oil Company

23. State: Texas
Party: Democrat
Campaign Contributors: National Sierra Club

24. State: Nebraska
Party: Republican
Campaign Contributors: Citizens For Low Taxes

- 25. State: Oklahoma**
Party: Democrat
Campaign Contributors: National Sierra Club
- 26. State: Illinois**
Party: Republican
Campaign Contributors: Citizens For Low Taxes
- 27. State: California**
Party: Democrat
Campaign Contributors: Mobil Oil Company
- 28. State: California**
Party: Republican
Campaign Contributors: Citizens For Low Taxes
- 29. State: Oregon**
Party: Democrat
Campaign Contributors: No More Nukes International
- 30. State: Washington**
Party: Republican
Campaign Contributors: Citizens For Low Taxes
- 31. State: California**
Party: Democrat
Campaign Contributors: No More Nukes International
- 32. State: Vermont**
Party: Republican
Campaign Contributors: Citizens For Low Taxes
- 33. State: Maine**
Party: Democrat
Campaign Contributors: Mobil Oil Company
- Total: Republicans 16**
Democrats 17

Political Parties and Organizations

Political Parties

Democrats – For the most part, Democrats are more liberal than conservative. They are apt to support the government’s getting involved in economic issues in the name of fairness. In other words, Democrats are more likely than Republicans to support higher taxes so that the government can afford to pay for programs to improve society, help less fortunate people and regulate business. Democrats also have not traditionally supported military build up. Liberals are usually more in favor of personal freedom (“freedom to”) rather than having the government make laws regarding people’s personal behavior and morality.

Republicans – Republicans are more likely conservative than liberal. On Social issues, they are more likely to support the government’s making laws to regulate people’s behavior-- conservatives believe in the government serving as a “moral compass” for society. Republicans are also generally more laissez-faire in their approach to the economy. They prefer less regulation of business and lower taxes to playing Robin Hood.

Political Action Committees (PACs)

Citizens For Low Taxes-- a political action committee dedicated to keeping Americans’ taxes low; this group wants Congressmen/women to vote to spend a maximum of no more than \$1.4 billion (\$1400 million)

No More Nukes International--a PAC dedicated to stopping the expansion of the U.S. military; this group believes the war in Iraq to unnecessary and immoral.

National Sierra Club-- an environmental advocacy group that fights to clean up pollution; this group also wants to regulate the ski industry as much as possible. The industry, the Sierra Club believes, pollutes mountains and ruins animal habitat.

Mobil Company-- the largest most powerful oil company in the world; it opposes the coastal clean-up bill because it fears that the U.S. government will blame them for the pollution and create bad publicity.

The Bills (Sponsors in Parentheses)

H.R. 9812: The Protection of the Unborn Act (12,15,18,20,29)

Sure to face eventual challenge in the Supreme Court, this bill will make all abortion illegal except in cases in which a doctor says that the mother has more than a 10% chance of dying as a result of the pregnancy. There is no taxpayer cost to the bill.

H.R. 6742: The Ski Industry Fraud Prevention Act (9,14,32,33)

Last year, the company *Sugarloaf USA* was involved in a scandal in which the CEO was convicted of the overstating his company’s profits to try to inflate stock prices. This bill will create a government agency called the *Ski Industry Fraud Prevention Board*. The board will actively regulate the ski industry employees. Because government offices will be opened up in Vermont, Maine, Colorado, and Utah, these states will benefit from new economic activity. The cost of this new government regulation is \$300 million.

H.R. 2323: The Operation Iraqi Freedom Military Base Act (1,2,3,4,16,23)

A new military base will be built in the small town of Beaumont, Texas, rather than in other places that have been propose by military: Nebraska, Illinois, Colorado, or Vermont. The new base will be a blessing to Texas’s economy and bring millions into Beaumont and surrounding areas. If this bill fails to pass, it is possible that a new site will be chosen from among the military’s other choices. This base will serve as training ground for Army Rangers who will travel to Iraq to try to maintain order and transition the government back to the Iraqis. The president is strongly pushing for this new base and has given speeches promising that the Republican Party will “make this base a reality in order to protect the freedom of suppressed peoples all over the world, especially those who have had to endure the brutal regiment of Saddam Hussein and his axis of anvil.” The base will cost the government \$300 million.

H.R. 7353: The Atlantic Coastal Beautification Act (10,11,12)

This federal funding will be designated for superficial cleaning of the coastline and beaches in Maine, Massachusetts, Florida, and Virginia. The cleaning will have a small but noticeable impact on animal health and a large effect on making beaches more attractive for tourists. The cost of this bill is \$300 million.

H.R. 7823: The Farming Drought Relief Act (5,6,7,8,24,25,26)

Because Texas, Nebraska, Illinois, Oklahoma, and Tennessee have suffered through a profound drought this year, thousands of farmers in these states are in danger of losing their farms. This bill will pay farmers subsidies so they can survive this tough year and stay in business for next year. Farmers in the drought-affected states are in direct competition with farmers from California, Oregon and Washington; these west-coast farmers have benefited greatly from the drought in the mid-west and would be hurt by the advantage being given to mid-western farmers by the government. Subsidies would amount to \$300 million.

H.R. 2349: The Inner City Educational Funding Act (22,27,31)

This funding will go to some of the nation's largest cities to institute programs for poor, inner-city youth. Examples of the way the money will be used include the following: after-school tutoring, basketball leagues at community centers, dental appointments, and condom distribution to high school students age 16 and over. The following cities will share the funding equally: Chicago, Boston, Miami, Denver, Los Angeles, and New York City. The cost of this bill is \$400 million.

H.R. 7309: The American Income Tax Relief and Rebate Act (17,19,21,28,30)

This bill will return \$1000 to each taxpayer in the country. Because the U.S. government taxes too much and spends too much money on assorted programs, it is important to give Americans some of their hard-earned money back. The Cost of the rebate package is \$600 million.

Journals Assignment for Congressional Role Play

Your goal is the roleplay to satisfy three of the following four goals:

1. Get the bill you are sponsoring passed.
2. Please your constituents back home.
3. Please your party (Democrats or Republican)
4. Please your campaign contributor

By successfully completing three of these goals will ensure that you have enough voter support and campaign funding to be re-elected to another term. 20% of your roleplay grade will be determined by your success in getting re-elected. 80% of your journal will be your writing grade, determined by the criteria on the grading rubric. Your role play grade is worth an exam grade.

Please write every day; your total writing should average out to be one page per day. Here are two main suggestions for topics about which to write.

- **Set your goals and plan your strategy.**
 - Whose votes will you try to win for your sponsored bill? What will you offer in return for their votes?
 - How will you please the people back home? How will you avoid disappointing them?

- What does your party want to do? How will you please it and avoid displeasing it?
- What does your campaign contributor want you to do? How will you please it and avoid displeasing it?
- What strategies have you already tried and how much success did these strategies bring you?
- **How will you vote on each bill? How are your decisions changing, if at all?**
 - How do you feel personally about the bill? How do you feel in your heart?
 - Are there any bills about which you just don't care that much? Could you
 - Perhaps trade your vote on a bill for someone else's vote on your bill?
 - How do the people back home feel about the bill?
 - How do you feel about the bill as a Democrat/Republican?
 - How does your campaign contributor feel about the bill?

Your last journal entry should include your explanation for why you deserve the 20% credit for being re-elected. Make your best argument and provide as much evidence as possible. I highly recommend writing one paragraph for each goal about which you are writing. For example, one topic sentence could be, "I will get re-elected because I pleased my political party, the Republicans." Another topic sentence could be, "I will get re-elected because I have succeeded in getting the bill I sponsored passed by the House of Representatives." Your last entry should be about 2 pages long.

11th Grade US History Congressional Journal Grading Sheet

Balancing the four priorities (sponsored bill, constituents, political party, campaign contributors)

1 2 3 4

Documenting attempted strategies and analyzing results.

1 2 3 4

Strategy and foresight.

1 2 3 4

Original observations and commentary.

1 2 3 4

Writing a page a day every day.

1 2 3 4