Congress Simulation Game

Procedures

1. Each representative is assigned the views of constituents in a fictional Congressional district. Each district view sheet indicates points to be made from passage or defeat of legislation.

2. Students receive positive score [as indicted] if they are able to secure passage or defeat of legislation in accordance with the views of their constituents. They receive a negative score if legislation passes which constituents want defeated or vv

3. Some issues are more important to constituents than other issues. Needless to say, large point values are more important to constituents than smaller ones. Small ones MAY be dealt away for larger ones. The idea is to end up with a positive score [reelection]

4. As with real representatives, students are not required to vote according to their constituents’ wishes, however, as we all know, there is a price to pay for such a decision.

5. Representatives MUST become familiar with these issues. This is necessary to participate in debate as well as to make decisions on voting. Representatives should be aware of their own personal convictions as well as those of their constituents.

Lobbying/Bargaining

1. There will be two primary lobbying sessions. One session will be prior to any business taking place. The second will occur after half the issues have been voted on. During this time, representatives should line up the votes they need by bargaining, persuasion on the issues, and making deals to “secure” votes. All issues start with an even number of yes/no votes.

2. Additional lobbying sessions may be requested and granted by majority vote of the representative assembly.

3. Good representatives do not allow legislation to come up if they are not sure of the outcome of the vote. Keep accurate records of CV [votes committed to you and by you] and keep records of promises made to you and by you. There are legitimate delaying tactics built in to the procedures so that you can control when issues are voted on.

4. Should commitments be kept? If not, why not [and when?]. These are personal decisions.

Procedure/Debate and Voting

1. The Assembly by majority vote will establish the first issues to be voted on. The assembly will also determine the order AFTER the second “bargaining” round.

2. Debate on each issue will last 20 minutes – 10 minutes in favor of the issue and 10 minutes in opposition. Division of debate time will be determined by the floor leader on each side of the issue. Floor leaders for each issue will be appointed during a pre-debate caucus. Hopefully, by the time of debate, representatives have become very familiar with the pros and cons of each issue. The purpose of debate is to convince those who are on the fence and/or appeal to the representatives to consider the rightness or wrongness of the issue. Personal convictions of the representatives may overcome promises and/or constituent desires. [What is the role of a representative, anyway? Do they only represent the views of their constituents or are they supposed to use their conscience and expertise to decide issues?]

3. At the conclusion of debate, the President of the Assembly [Mrs. Cetrone] will call the roll. Representatives may vote aye, nay or pass. At the conclusion of the roll representatives who passed will be returned to in order to determine their vote. A second pass results in a recorded “abstention” or a “NON VOTE.”

4. Laws need a majority of those casting votes – providing there is a quorum present. Amendments require 2/3 of those present, providing there is a quorum present.

5. Representatives should keep records of AV [the actual vote cast by the representative] of representatives and compare with CV [the vote they committed to you]. This is useful in the second round of bargaining/lobbying. You will learn who you can trust and who you can’t.
Grading
1. Is based upon participation during lobbying sessions and debate. Floor leaders receive extra consideration. Quantity and quality of remarks made during debate are noted. The more informed and reasoned the argument is, the more likely you are to add points. Poorly informed or poorly supported argument may result in loss of points.
2. Your voting record sheet will be collected and graded for completeness.
3. There will be a written assignment at the conclusion based upon your observations regarding the game and on the role of representatives.
4. Students will not be graded on whether or not they are reelected but this information will be revealed.

The Legislation:

1. **Balanced Budget Amendment** – [H.J. Res. 1, 2, 4, 6, 11, 24] Requirement that the budget be balanced by 2015. This may require budget cuts OR increased taxes – likely both. Under the amendment, it will no longer be permitted for the president to submit – nor the Congress to approve – budgets which are not balanced. Requires 2/3 or 3/5 vote.

2. **Fair Minimum Wage Act** – [H.R. 1010] Amends the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 (FLSA) to increase the federal minimum wage for employees to: (1) $8.20 an hour on the first day of the third month after the enactment of this Act; (2) $9.15 an hour after one year; (3) $10.10 an hour after two years; and (4) the amount determined by the Secretary of Labor (based on increases in the Consumer Price Index) after three years, and annually thereafter. Increases the federal minimum wage for tipped employees to $3.00 an hour for one year. Provides a formula for subsequent annual adjustments of the wage increase to ensure that it remains equal to 70% of the wage in effect under FLSA for other employees.

3. **Farm Bill** – [H.R. 2642] The Farm Bill is a comprehensive bill that guides and authorizes funding for most federal farm and food policies, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Every five years, Congress renews the Farm Bill through the reauthorization process. Title IV of the Farm Bill covers domestic food and nutrition and commodity distribution programs. Farm bills can be highly controversial and can impact international trade, environmental conservation, food safety, and the well-being of rural communities. The agricultural subsidy programs mandated by the farm bills are the subject of intense debate both within the U.S. and internationally.

4. **Ending Federal Marijuana Prohibition Act of 2013** – [H.R. 499] To decriminalize marijuana at the Federal level, to leave to the States a power to regulate marijuana that is similar to the power they have to regulate alcohol, and for other purposes. It would allow states to choose between prohibiting marijuana entirely, making marijuana medically available, decriminalizing the possession of marijuana, taxing and regulating marijuana like alcohol, having "dry" and "wet" counties, regulating marijuana like tomatoes, and so forth; also remove marijuana from Schedule I of the Controlled Substances Act.

5. **Gun Control Assault Weapons Ban of 2013** – [H.R. 437/S. 150] Amends the federal criminal code to ban the import, sale, manufacture, transfer, or possession of a semiautomatic assault weapons; Makes it unlawful to: (1) import, sell, manufacture, transfer, or possess a large capacity ammunition feeding device; or (2) store or keep any grandfathered semiautomatic weapon that may become accessible by an individual who is prohibited from receiving or possessing such a weapon. Provides funds for buyback programs.

6. **The Citizen Legislature Act** – A constitutional amendment which would limit U.S. Senators to 2 terms of six years each and House members to six terms of two years each. There would also be a mandatory retirement age of 70 years old.

Newspapers, Blogs
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Bill & Friday: Gold 2, 3, 4, Blue 1, 3, 4

James