

TITLE OF LESSON

American Government Unit 2 Lesson 25 – Committee Meetings  
*What does democracy in action look like?*

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TIME ESTIMATE FOR THIS LESSON

One class period

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ALIGNMENT WITH STANDARDS

California – History 12.3, 12.4

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MATERIALS

Committee Folders (containing Committee Record and Bills) – Teacher Created  
**Current Events Presentation** – Student Page  
**Senate Bills** – Student Page

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LESSON OBJECTIVES

- To debate and vote on Bills in committee
  - To experience the process of democracy by attempting to pass Bills into law
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FOCUS AND MOTIVATE STUDENTS – WARM-UP ACTIVITY

- 1) Homework Check – Stamp/initial complete homework assignments. Collect any newly completed Bills, quickly assign them a committee, and pass them off to the Legislative Clerk to record and distribute them to the appropriate committee. Newspapers should be distributed by the Media. Pass back graded work and have students place in the appropriate section of their binders.
  - 2) **Agenda** – Have students copy the goal, agenda, and homework onto the next clean page in a notebook.
  - 3) **Current Events** – Collect the overhead transparencies from the Current Events presenters for today. Below the goal/agenda, copy the titles for three current events stories that they have chosen. Have students copy these and prepare to take notes.
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ACTIVITIES – INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP

1. Committees – Students should be sitting in their committee groups upon entering the classroom.
2. Current Events Presentations – Have students come to the front of the class one at a time to present their articles. At the end of each presentation, the students should turn in their **Current Events Presentation** sheet, stapled to a copy of the news article. Grades and comments should be written on the back of the **Current Events Presentation** sheet and returned to the students the next lesson. Choose the presenters for the next day that current events are due and give them a copy of the **Current Events Presentation** sheet to complete.
3. Committee Instructions – Again, ask another student (one that has not participated recently) to share with you the seven steps of a Bill becoming a law and what step the class is currently involved with (step 3 – committee meetings). In today’s lesson, students will continue their debates and discussions around Bills that they began yesterday (remind students that they will be working in committees again in Lessons 28 and 29). Choose a Committee Folder at random and briefly go through the Bills that are currently being discussed, debated and possibly already voted on. Show them the Daily Record poster (teacher created) and the list of Bills that have so far been officially introduced (this is the job of the Legislative Clerk. It may not be completely up to date yet, but it should be close by the end of the class today.) Remind students of the different roles and jobs each person must do and emphasize that they have the power to change or alter any Bill that they want. When students know what they need to do, pass out the Committee Folders and have them get started.

4. Lobbyist Check-In – As the committees are beginning their work, meet with the two lobbyists to gauge their status. Is their Bill introduced? Who is sponsoring it? Which committee is it in? Who is the chairperson for that committee? Has the Bill been discussed yet? Voted on yet? Why not? If the Lobbyists are going to try to get their Bills passed into law, they need to be pushing their Bill every minute by spending their money and giving out votes. They also need to think one step ahead (what is the next step in the process?) so that they can prepare to get their Bill through the next level of debate. If they are particularly conniving, they should also be thinking of ways to stall or kill their opponent’s Bill (depending on how precocious or involved the “lobbyists” are, the teacher could also suggest this possibility to both of them).
5. Committee Meetings – During the committee meetings watch for questionable, unethical, or even illegal practices among the representatives. Are all Senators participating in debates? Are some Senators voting on Bills that they haven’t even read? Are representatives acting vengeful and vindictive? Are some representatives playing favorites and passing Bills of their friends? Are Senators receiving money (not illegal) to push through certain Bills? Are some representatives asking for money (illegal!) to push through Bills? Are the Lobbyists “telling” Senators how to vote? As you see or hear these activities going on notify the Media to write and print such stories in the newspaper (remember, negative stories affect their grade). In addition, since you (the teacher) are President, you could also go around and let certain Senators know what Bills you find acceptable, which are unacceptable (that you will veto) and which you might accept if there are changes made. What’s particularly fun is to make pronouncements (“I think that the workers in this country need help. They need affordable health care!”) that give representatives ideas on the President’s agenda.
6. Homework – With a few minutes left in class pass out blank **Senate Bills** (Student Page) to students and encourage them to write Bills (they can rewrite their Bills if they have already been killed) sooner rather than later, in order to have enough time to make it through the entire process.

(Teacher Note – At the end of class, collect all Committee Folders and have the Legislative Clerk – or yourself – be sure to record all votes on Bills and update the Daily Record poster so that it reflects all changes and votes on Bills for the next lesson. Make sure that the Model Congress Binder is updated with all Bills that have been passed or killed in committees. Also, make 5 or 6 copies of the **Official Record of Bills** for the party leaders to use tomorrow.

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#### HOMEWORK

1. Write a new Bill for the Model Congress or amend or rewrite a previous bill.
  2. Continue with service requirement work.
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#### GROUP ROLES

None

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#### DOCUMENTATION FOR PORTFOLIO

##### Unit 1

Action Plan  
Persuasive Essay or Flash Argument: Why should government care...?  
American Government Unit 1 Final Exam

##### Unit 2

Political Beliefs Project  
Ideological Plan  
GIP Question Sheet  
Service Requirement Check-Ins