



Introduction:

The “There Should Be a Law” simulation will assist teachers in walking students through the Texas legislative system. Students will be asked to make the best choices as a bill works its way through the process to becoming a law. Many of the screens of the simulation utilize actual pictures of the Texas capitol in Austin, so an additional learning opportunity is provided. With some of the screens, questions will be utilized that allow the teacher to extend the learning to additional Texas history and government TEKS.



Opening Slide—“THERE SHOULD BE A LAW” (View of the Texas capitol)

Question:

Looking at the picture of the Texas capitol, how do you think it compares in size to the nation’s capitol in Washington D.C.?

Answer:

Although the nation’s capitol in Washington is larger in overall size, the Texas capitol is taller. How much taller is in dispute. Some say measurements indicate the capitol in Austin is 32 feet taller than the nation’s capitol. Others say it is only 7 or 8 feet taller.

Question:

Of what material is the Texas capitol made? In what part of Texas is this material probably found?

Answer:

The Texas capitol is made of sunset red granite, quarried near Marble Falls, Texas. This material was used throughout the exterior when constructing the capitol in 1888. It took six years to complete the capitol, with construction beginning in 1882. The restoration project of the capitol began in 1988 and the same granite was again used.

Question:

Why do you think the capitol had to be restored and expanded in 1988?

Answer:

First of all, it was the hundred-year anniversary of the original capitol building. Secondly, a fire in the East Wing of the capitol in 1983 showed weaknesses in the original construction of the capitol. Finally, the government of Texas had grown and more space was needed. Not only was a major restoration of the original capitol completed, but also an extension underground was built that doubled the size of the capitol. This extension holds offices and conferences rooms and was constructed of the same pink granite as the original structure.





Question:

What is on top of the dome of the capitol?

Answer:

A statue known as the "Goddess of Liberty" graces the top of the dome. The original statue was made of zinc, but the new one is made of aluminum. During the restoration it was decided that the original was too weathered to stay atop the dome. If one could see it close up, one would see that the "Goddess" holds a gold star in one hand to represent freedom. In the other hand, she holds a sword to represent strength. Inside and directly under the dome is a gold star with letters around the points that spell "Texas."

Question:

Directly under the dome on the floor, one can find the seal of the Republic of Texas, which was founded in 1836. Surrounding this seal are five seals that represent the sovereign nations that have governed Texas at one time. What are the names of these five nations?

Answer:

First is the Spanish seal representing its arrival in 1519, followed by the French in 1685. Mexico is next, acknowledging in 1821 that Mexico won her independence from Spain. Fourth is the United States seal, recognizing the annexation of Texas to the U.S. in 1845. The last seal represents the Confederate States of America, acknowledging the secession of Texas in 1861 at the onset of the Civil War. Decorating the walls of the round rotunda are the portraits of former Texas governors. Each governor has his or her portrait hung when he or she leaves office. All the portraits are moved to make room for the new one. These portraits now continue up four floors of the circular rotunda.

Question:

Who is the first Governor of Texas? Who are the only two women to date to serve as Governor of Texas?

Answer:

The first governor was Sam Houston. The two women who have served as governor are Miriam Ferguson, better known as "Ma Ferguson," who served in 1924, and Ann Richards, who was elected in 1990. Miriam Ferguson is also honored as the first woman governor by a marble bust on the first floor of the rotunda.





Slide—OVERVIEW OF THE TEXAS LEGISLATURE (no picture)

Question:

What are the other constitutions under which Texas operated before the current Constitution of 1876?

Answer:

The Constitutions of 1824, 1827, 1836, 1845, and 1869

Question:

What are the three branches of the Texas government, and what is the function of each?

Answer:

The legislative branch is responsible for making the laws of Texas; the executive branch is responsible for executing the laws; and the judicial branch is responsible for interpreting the laws.

Question:

How are the Texas House and the Senate different?

Answer:

The House has 150 members while the Senate has 31. The presiding officer of the House is the Speaker and he or she is chosen from among the members of the House. The presiding officer of the Senate is the Lt. Governor, who is elected by the people of Texas every four years. The term of office for a representative is two years while a senator is elected for four years.




Slide—STEP ONE: WHO WILL INTRODUCE THE BILL IN THE TEXAS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES?

Question:

Why is the support from Representative Starr necessary in order to get the bill passed?

Answer:

As stated in the overview, for legislation to pass it must enjoy the support from the chairman of the committee responsible for this aspect of Texas life. Representative Starr is the chairperson of the Transportation Committee. This committee handles all of the transportation issues throughout the state. She has been appointed by the Speaker of the House, whose approval will also play a part in whether or not the bill will be passed.





Slide—STEP TWO: REPRESENTATIVE STARR INTRODUCES THE BILL TO THE TEXAS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Question:

Representative Starr has been chosen by the speaker to introduce the proposed bill to the House. Describe everything that is behind Representative Starr as she stands at the podium.

Answer:

The center chair is designated for the Speaker of the House. The House Parliamentarian sits to one side of the speaker, and the third chair is left vacant for anyone to whom the speaker needs to speak while the House is in session. Behind the speaker's chair is the battle flag from the Battle of San Jacinto in 1836. Representative Starr would be facing the 150 original desks of the members of the Texas House of Representatives.

Question:

What is significant about the Battle of San Jacinto, which is where the battle flag originated?

Answer:

When Texan forces won the Battle of San Jacinto, Texas became independent from Mexico. This is the original flag from the Battle of San Jacinto in which Texas won independence from Mexico in 1836. This is thought to be the only battle flag at the April 21 confrontation. In this battle, the Republic of Texas army was led by Sam Houston. He ordered his troops to surprise Mexican General Santa Anna and his soldiers in order to catch them off guard and surround them so they would not be allowed to escape. The plan worked, and the battle lasted less than 20 minutes.



Slide—SPEAKER OF THE TEXAS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ASSIGNS THE BILL TO A COMMITTEE

Question:

Who is portrayed in the painting that can be seen to the immediate right of the battle flag?

Answer:

This is the painting of Sam Houston entitled, "The Raven." The painting honors Houston's membership in the Cherokee nation. This honor is illustrated by the draping of an Indian blanket around his shoulders. The painting is the work of William Henry Huddle. Other paintings that hang on the walls of the Texas House include one of James Hogg, the first native Texas to become governor; a rare one of James Bowie; and another of Audie Murphy, the most decorated soldier in World War II and a native Texan.





Question:

Besides being the hero of the Battle of San Jacinto, what are some of the other roles Sam Houston played in Texas history?

Answer:

He was the second and fourth President of the Republic of Texas in 1836 and 1841. He was the Major General of the Texas Army of Independence; a member of the Texas House of Representatives when Texas was a Republic; a United States Senator; and the Governor of the State of Texas.

Question:

Why was Sam Houston removed from the office of governor in 1861?

Answer:

He refused to sign the Oath of Allegiance to the Confederacy.



Slide —STEP FOUR: THE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE HOLDS A HEARING ON THE BILL

Question:

Why are the bills and the committee hearings posted outside the door of each chamber of the House and the Senate?

Answer:

This allows interested citizens and groups to know the date, time, and location of the committee hearings. They can then attend and testify before the committee to express their opinions about the pending legislation. These hearings usually meet in the Capitol Extension, which was built to provide much needed office space and conference rooms when the capitol was remodeled in 1988.



Slide—STEP SEVEN: THE BILL REACHES THE FLOOR OF THE HOUSE FOR DEBATE AND VOTING

Question:

How do you think members of the House conduct their voting on a proposed bill?

Answer:

The members of the House use electronic voting on the board which also serves as the roster of their names. When they are voting they use the voting button seen on the screen. A green light by the name means they have voted “yes”; a red light indicates “no”; and a white light indicates he or she is “present but not voting.” Also watching the actions of the legislature are citizens who are welcome to view the proceedings from the upstairs gallery.





Slide—STEP EIGHT: THE HOUSE BY A MAJORITY VOTE OF THE MEMBERS PASSES THE BILL AS AMENDED. THE SENATE ALSO PASSES THE BILL, BUT THE HOUSE AND SENATE VERSIONS OF THE BILL ARE DIFFERENT.

Question:

How is the Senate chamber seen in this slide different from the House of Representatives seen in a previous slide?

Answer:

There are green drapes behind the podium. Also, there are two paintings on either side, as well as fewer desks on the floor. This is because this is the Senate chamber and there are only 31 members as opposed to 150 in the House.

Question:

Just as Sam Houston was honored in the House, what other Texas hero is honored with a portrait behind the Lt. Governor's chair?

Answer:

Behind the Lt. Governor's chair is a portrait of Stephen F. Austin. It is the oldest in the capitol and was completed right before he died in 1836. Austin didn't want to sit for this painting, but since he had missed his sister's birthday she insisted that he send her a new portrait.

Question:

What two famous battles for Texas independence are depicted in large paintings on the back wall of the Senate?

Answer:

On the back wall of the Senate are two large paintings done by the Irish artist, H.A. McArdle. The first entitled "Dawn at the Alamo" depicts the 13th and final day of the battle in March 1836. All of the heroes are depicted in this panoramic view of the battle, even Jim Bowie, who was believed to have died earlier. Mr. McArdle portrays him as a ghostly figure fighting in spirit. Also pictured in the painting are Davy Crockett, using his rifle as a club because he was out of ammunition, and Santa Anna, who is holding a red flag indicating, "no quarter." The 14 women and children who were allowed to leave after the battle are shown in one corner along with Joe Travis, a slave of William Travis. Joe was freed to tell the story of the massacre in hopes that it would scare the Texans from continuing the fight. On the other wall, McArdle painted the "Battle of San Jacinto." In the painting, the artist depicts Sam Houston by his wounded horse with his hat and sword in his hand. In one corner, Deaf Smith can be seen destroying the bridge so Santa Anna could not escape. Santa Anna can be seen in the upper part of the painting fleeing from the scene in a private's uniform. He was captured by the Texas forces the next day in the woods.





Question:

Who was the first Texan to become President of the United States and whose portrait is hanging in the Senate chamber?

Answer:

Lyndon Baines Johnson was the first Texan to serve as President of the United States, and his portrait is hanging in the Senate chamber.

Question:

Who was the first African American Texas woman to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives and whose portrait also hangs in the Texas Senate?

Answer:

Barbara Jordan was the first African American U.S. Congresswoman from Texas. Beside her portrait is one of Mirabeau B. Lamar, the second President of Texas and considered the "Father of Texas Education."

Question:

Why does the Senate also have to vote on the proposed bill?

Answer:

Texas has a bicameral legislature, which means both houses have to approve a bill in the exact same form for it to become law.



Slide—STEP TEN: THE COMPROMISE VERSION OF THE BILL IS RETURNED TO THE FLOOR OF BOTH CHAMBERS. NO AMENDMENTS OR CHANGES ARE ALLOWED. A MAJORITY OF THE MEMBERS OF BOTH CHAMBERS MUST VOTE FOR THE COMPROMISE VERSION OF THE BILL FOR IT TO PASS.

Question:

Members do not have to be present to vote for bills. In fact, there is a video of them voting for each other when a member is absent. What are the advantages/disadvantages of this procedure?

Answer:

Since a majority of the members have to vote in favor of a piece of legislation for it to pass, allowing them to vote via video would expedite the procedure. This is especially important since the legislature only meets every two years and has only 140 days to pass all of the needed legislation. The two chambers vote in different manners. The House uses the electronic voting board and buttons seen in the picture. However, senators use their fingers, one for yes, two for no, or three for present and not voting.





Slide—STEP ELEVEN, PART II: ACCORDING TO THE TEXAS CONSTITUTION, THE GOVERNOR HAS THREE CHOICES WHEN DECIDING WHAT TO DO WITH THE BILL.

Question:

What is the term of office of the Texas Governor?

Answer:

He or she is elected to a four year term. While the governor maintains an office in the capitol, he also has an official residence. The governor uses the office in the capitol for various duties. At the front of the office is a reception area. This reception area is decorated in the Victorian style and has the nickname "the Living Room of Texas." Here the governor greets dignitaries, signs bills, holds press conferences, and carries out other ceremonial duties. Distinguished guests who have visited this area include humorist Will Rogers; pilot Charles Lindbergh; comedian Bob Hope; Presidents Calvin Coolidge, Lyndon B. Johnson, and George H. Bush; Reverend Billy Graham; pro golfer Lee Trevino; actress Carol Burnett; boxer George Foreman; astronaut Sally Ride; and Queen Elizabeth of England.

