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High School Youth And Government Manual
YMCA Youth And Government
Rhode Island Model Youth Legislature



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Rhode Island Youth and Government High School Manual

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Contact Information

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Overview

YMCA Youth and Government's Rhode Island Model Youth Legislature is a one-day experiential learning conference where students participate in a simulation of the State's legislative process. Rhode Island High School (9th-12th Grade) students will serve as State Senators and State Representatives. They will write bills before the conference and then debate the potential legislation they and their peers have prepared. Students will learn a wide range of skills including critical thinking, articulating beliefs, and engaging constructively with others who hold similar and opposing views.

As a nationally recognized program, Youth and Government engages in national government and politics. Since 1936 it has promoted civic literacy as well as serving communities at large. Youth and Government has now seen more than three hundred of its proposed laws eventually become actual laws in states throughout the country, including:

- Require signal lights at railroad crossings
- Reclaim striped mined land
- Hold 18 years old's responsible for contracts they sign
- Create the white line on the side of the road
- Establish "right turn on red"
- Established Special Education
- Provide for driver's education
- Promote campaign finance reform
- Provide medical malpractice reform
- Ratification of the 26th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States granting the vote to 18 years old.

Rhode Island High School Model Youth Legislature

General Information

High School Event Date: March 31, 2023

Location: Renaissance Providence Downtown Hotel and **the Rhode Island State Capitol**

Registration: All forms, registration, bills, and payment are due by **March 15, 2023**

Register Delegates at this link: [Student Registration Form](#)

Submit Bills at this link: [Bill Submission Form](#)

Fees: \$75 Per Student

Lunch will be provided during the conference. Please eat breakfast before attending

Financial Aid: The YMCA is happy to offer individual need base assistance to ensure that all students have the chance to participate. Students can apply at **this link: [Rhode Island Financial Aid](#)**

Eligibility

To participate in the YMCA Youth and Government Conference, students must be a High school student. This includes grades 9th through 12th grade.

Bill Book

The Bill Book is each student's guide to the Conference. Upon Arrival each person will receive a bill book that contains the Conference Schedule, Maps of each location, a copy of every bill to be presented, and any other relevant info. Students should always have these unless told otherwise.

Sample Conference Schedule

Pre-Conference

Preparation

Delegates and Advisors will prepare bills for debate, meeting at a regularity of their choosing and with the ability to schedule zoom meetings with the State Director or receive feedback via email.

Day of

9-9:30am Registration and Check-in

Delegates and Advisors will arrive at the Capitol Plaza in Montpelier, where they will receive their conference materials including the bill book, lapel pin, nametag, and placard. Everyone will gather in the Governor's Ballroom for the Opening Session and Orientation.

9:30-9:55am Orientation/Opening Session

The Youth Governor will give their opening address, the Youth Leadership will be introduced, and the days schedule will be reviewed. Students will be dismissed to their committees.

10:00am-11:30pm Committees

Delegates will separate into groups of 25-35 people to debate Bills in Committee. Bills Passed in Committee will be debated in Chambers after lunch.

11:30-12:45pm Lunch & Capitol Tour

Lunch will be provided, with half the delegate groups going on a tour of the State Capitol, then eating lunch, and the other half eating lunch first then touring the Capitol.

1:15-3:15pm Chamber Sessions (House and Senate)

Students will debate the bills passed that morning in Committees in the Youth House and =Youth Senate. Bills Passed will be sent to the other chamber if time allows. Bills passed into law will be signed by the Youth Governor.

3:15-4:00pm Closing Session (Elections and Awards)

Students running for Leadership the following year will give speeches of up to 2 minutes, and all delegates will vote, winners will be announced at the end. Delegates will be recognized for their efforts, and outstanding speakers and bills will be recognized.

How do I get started?

The YMCA Youth And Government Program is designed to allow students in 9th-12th grade to gain a basic understanding of their State Government. We design the process with the goal of being accessible for all students and maximizing the efforts and time of all adults involved. Every group is different, and the Y staff will work with you to help create a plan that works for you specifically, but the entire process falls into three basic steps. Each group must identify the students, help them write their bills, then prepare them for the conference.

You can easily have a successful with group with 3 basic steps, each of which can be its own meeting. However, you can continue to add benefit and value to the experience by expanding or having more as you see fit. For all meetings, we have scripts and material to share if need be. The three steps are as followed:

Step 1: Choosing Your Group

Picking the Group

Every Advisor needs to find a group of students that they are willing to bring on this experience, and trust to be mature enough to handle the opportunity. How you select these students is up to you and your school. All 9th-12th graders are eligible on our end, but there are many examples of methods schools use. Identifying the students is also very important to the program's success.

There is not an ideal student to recruit for YAG. However, we have found that those who are interested in public policy, mock trial, government, debating, law, media, journalism, and current events, or students who just like to get to know people are a great place to start. Many schools open the process to all who are interested, some teachers choose to teach the program as an elective class, others use the program only for their Student Council or gifted programs. Often groups in their first year will hand pick a few students as a trial.

Group Size

There is no specific size that a group must be. Groups as large as 150 and as small as 1 have had great success in our programs. The most important thing is that the Advisor is comfortable with the group individually and as a whole.

Interest Meeting

Once you have decided who to offer the chance to, many groups will have a meeting where they explain the program and encourage these students to participate. A Y staff member is always happy to help with these meetings by being present to speak at them, and/or by helping prepare for them.

Research Challenge

At the end of an interest meeting, or once the students are identified, they should then be given the challenge to start deciding what they might want to write a bill about. They should be encouraged to bring some ideas to the next meeting, where they will decide who their partners are and what they are going to write about.

Step 2: Writing Your Bills

Once you have identified which students will be participating and given them the chance to do some research, it is time for the Bill Writing Process. Writing and presenting a bill is one of the most important portions of this process. Every student should be a part of helping to draft and prepare the team presenting each bill. The Bill Template has info and is available at this link:

[Rhode Island Bill Template](#)

Bill Author Teams

Every Bill can have between 1 and 6 Authors working together as a team. Please try to have as many students per bill as possible so more students get to be authors, but we understand the unique nature of working with students and so allow you the flexibility necessary to best accommodate each student. There is no disadvantage to a student who is not an author.

Each group is allowed to have 1 bill, and another for every 6 students (or portion thereof) they bring. For example,

- groups of 1-6 students may bring one bill,
- 7-12 students means two bills,
- 13-18 students is three bills, etc.

Exceptions can be made in individual cases by the State Director, but to allow for all bills prepared to be heard, the number of bills must be limited. Every student who attends the conference will be assigned to either the Senate or the House after registration. They need not worry about this during the bill writing process, except to know they will always be with their fellow Authors if they are on an Author team.

Bill Ideas

Students should write about things they care about and consult adults they know about what ideas to write about. A great resource for finding out more about the current laws is

<https://legislature.RhodeIsland.gov/statutes/> where you can search all current Rhode Island laws.

Practice Debates

You can have practice debates among your students on each other's bills, teaching about the importance of perspective, and allowing students to realize and anticipate arguments both for and against their idea so they are better prepared

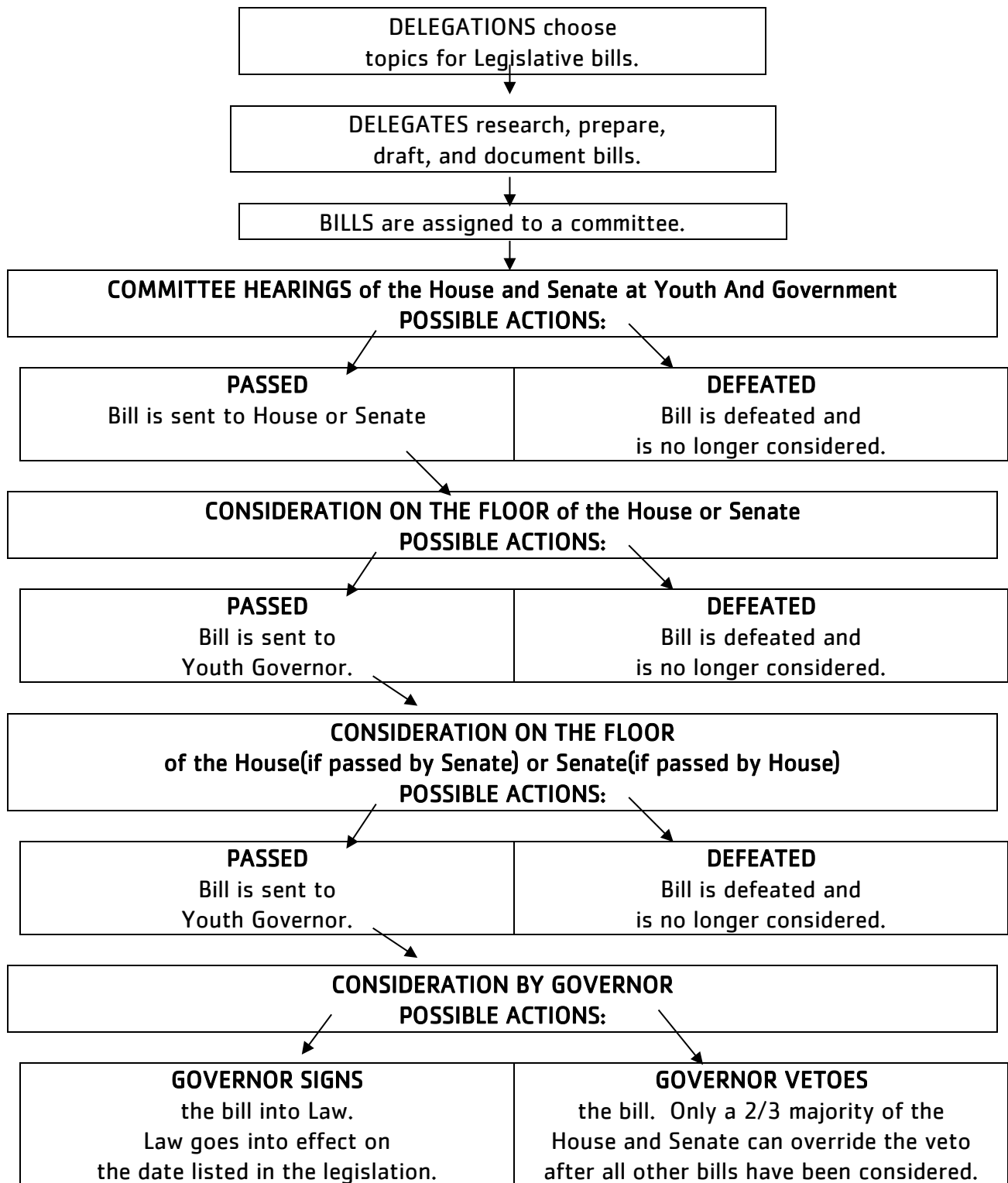
Bill Submission

Bills are due with your Registration on **March 31, 2023**. Submit Bills at this link: [Bill Submission Form](#)

Bill Presentation

Once the bill is written students will need to prepare for their presentation of the bill for debate at the conference. Debate for each bill follows the same process. Authors will be able to speak at the beginning and end of debate on their bill and will have a total of 4 minutes to divide between their opening and summation speeches. Between these speeches there will be a 2-minute period where delegates may ask the Authors technical, fact-based questions. That will be followed by alternating speeches in favor and opposed to the bill. Debate will close with the Author's summation, then the bills will be voted upon.

How a Bill Becomes Law at the Youth Legislature



Step 3: Preparing Your Team

Once your Bills have been submitted, your group can turn its focus to preparing for the debate aspect of the conference. At the conference every bill will be presented, and when students are not presenting their own bill, they will be debating those presented by others. This is to be done in a respectful and sincere manner, but it is also a chance for students to understand the power of their voice and their right to speak up on important issues. To prepare for this process, students need to practice and understand the Parliamentary Procedure that will be used, the purpose and goals of Debate, and how to give an effective speech.

Additionally, success at the conference is not solely based on a student's participation in debate but all portions of the conference. Thus, students should learn about the Conference Bill Book, how to read the Conference Schedule, and that it is important for them to seek to interact with students from other schools

Parliamentary Procedure & Debate

During the debate process students must follow Parliamentary Procedure, which includes getting recognized to speak, addressing the chair, and a few other small details. A more detailed explanation is available in our Debate Guidelines handout, and YMCA staff is happy to share or perform our Parliamentary Procedure and Debate workshop with your students.

PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE SCRIPT

This is the script that will be used by the chairs of debate during Committees and Chambers

Test in Bold is spoken aloud, *Text in italic is instructions*

- 1. It is now time for bill (#). Will the Sponsors of bill (#) come forward?**
 - a. Bill Sponsors walk to podium and display their placards.*
- 2. The Clerk will read the title of the bill.**
 - a. Clerk reads the Bill Title.*
- 3. The Bill Sponsors have 4 minutes to divide between their opening and closing statements. You may begin when ready.**
 - a. Bill Sponsors give their Opening Statement.*
- 4. Seeing as the Author's have used (amount of time) for their opening, they will have (3 minutes-amount of time used) for their closing.**
- 5. It is now time for a period of Non-Debatable Technical Questions. Are there any on the floor?**
 - a. The Chair will ask for any delegates who wish to ask a question to raise their placard*
 - b. The chair will announce the name of the delegate(s) recognized at that time to ask a Non-Debatable Technical Questions.*
 - c. The First Delegate recognized will stand, address the chair, and then ask the Sponsors their question.*
 - d. Delegates will continue asking questions in this fashion until the Chair announces that the time for Non-Debatable Technical Questions has elapsed.*
- 6. Seeing as the time for Non-Debatable Technical Questions has elapsed, it is now time for Con/Pro debate. We will begin with a speech in opposition, as the author's speech was taken as a speech in favor. Are there any delegates wishing to speak in opposition?**
 - a. The First Delegate recognized will stand, address the chair, and will begin speaking.*
- 7. That speech was taken as a speech in (favor/opposition). We will now have a speech in (favor/opposition). Are there any delegates wishing to speak in (favor/opposition)?**
 - a. Alternating Speeches in favor or in opposition to the passage of the bill will be given.*
 - b. The chair will announce the name of the delegate recognized at that time to speak.*
 - c. Students may speak for up to one minute when recognized.*
 - d. When the allotted time has passed, after the final opposition speech, the Chair calls previous question.*
- 8. The Time for debate has elapsed, and the chair calls the previous question. The author will have (amount of time from earlier) for their closing remarks. You may begin.**
 - a. Bill Sponsors give their Closing Statement.*
- 9. We will now move to a vote on this bill/ All in favor please raise your placard and, in a normal tone of voice, say "Aye." Thank you, please lower your placards. All opposed please raise your placards and, in a normal tone of voice, say "nay."**
 - a. Chair and Clerk will pay attention to the room and decide if the bill has been passed or defeated. If unsure they may call "Division," then repeat the process and count the numbers to be sure.*
- 10. It is in the opinion of this chair that this bill bill has been (passed/defeated).**

Student Roles

Representatives and Senators

All students who participate will be serving as a Senator or Representative. This role will be assigned by the conference based on logistical need. Some students will also have the chance to serve in additional specialized roles.

Specialized Roles

Bill Author

Select students will be chosen from each group to prepare and present a piece of legislation. Every Bill can have between 1 and 6 Authors working together as a team. Please try to have as many students per bill as possible so more students get to be authors, but we understand the unique nature of working with students and so allow you the flexibility necessary to best accommodate each student. There is no disadvantage to a student who is not an author.

Each group is allowed to have 1 bill, and another for every 6 students (or portion thereof) they bring. For example,

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Candidate

Any 10th or 11th grader may be nominated to run for office. They need to be confident, responsible, and a good leader. They will give a speech in front of the General House and must be willing to serve throughout the year, including attending the conference the following year as a 9th grade student. For more info, see the Candidates & Elections section on the next page.

Committee Chair

Each Delegation may appoint one student, preferably an 12th grader, to serve as a Committee Chair. This person will chair or co-chair a committee. They need to be confident, responsible, and a good leader. They will receive special training during the practice session on the first night as well as preparatory materials before the conference.

Awards & Recognition

The Rhode Island YMCA Youth and Government programs presents awards during the closing session of the conference. Awards and recognition are given based on achievements before and during the conference for our delegates, advisors, and schools. Awards and recognition are decided upon through Advisor and Volunteer nominations and Y-Staff observation.

Outstanding Bills

Awarded to the authors of the most innovative, well-researched, and thought-provoking bills based on advisor nominations and student ranking.

Outstanding Speakers

Awarded to the top delegates most frequently nominated by advisors and Y-staff based on their presence and performance while in committees and Chambers as well as behavior exemplifying the four core values.

Outstanding Delegates

Awarded to the top delegates most frequently nominated by advisors and Y-staff based on their presence and performance while in committees and Chambers as well as behavior exemplifying the four core values.

Candidates & Elections

The Rhode Island Youth and Government Program is a student led experience, and Officers are selected for the following year through an election. There can be only one candidate per delegation, and they are all in the same election. The Three top vote getters will be selected as Governor, Speaker of the House, and President of the Senate and will serve a one-year term.

- One Candidate in 10th or 11th Grade from each group may run for Office.
- All Candidates and Officers must be in good standing with their school administration.
- Campaigns may not hand out any items nor bring or create any items to use to promote the candidate. Social Media and Internet posts are also not allowed.
- Campaigns will only use in person-interactions and the speeches the students give to promote their candidate.
- Each candidate will run on an issue-based platform wherein he or she will explain his or her views on state issues to voters. Platforms will be based around three issues:
 - An issue that affects the candidate's community service interests
 - An issue that affects the candidate's local community
 - An issue that affects the commonwealth of New York as a whole
- Each Candidate for office will have two minutes to give their speech. At least one minute of the speech should be dedicated to the Candidate's platform(s). The remaining time may be used as the Candidate sees fit.
- Candidate speeches may not include use of props, including people as props (i.e. audience participation).
- All Candidate Election speeches must be pre-approved by Advisors before conference.
- In debate, only Candidates may identify themselves as such. When addressing the chair, a Candidate may identify themselves by saying, "John Doe, Candidate from X School, Chair," however, another member of said delegation would be out of order in saying, "Ambassador Joe Smith, representing X School, home of Candidate John Doe, Chair."
- Failure by a Candidate or their delegation to conduct a campaign in an appropriate manner will result in the Candidate being removed from the ballot.
- Additional campaign restrictions may be drawn up according to the wishes of the host site of the conference.

Failure to comply with Candidate Guideline will result in

- First time offense will be given a warning
- If there is a second offense, the Candidate's school will lose voting privileges for the office for which the Candidate is running, and the Candidate may be disqualified at the discretion of the YMCA Youth and Government Director

Advisors

Rhode Island YMCA Youth and Government could not function without our outstanding Advisors. They function as coaches, mentors, and teachers to the members of their delegation and are essential to the smooth functioning of the conference. They inspire and motivate, while allowing their students to take on leadership roles. Advisors are responsible for registration and supervision at conferences, but more importantly, Rhode Island YMCA Advisors change teens' lives every day.

Prior to Conference

- Work with students on submission of bills, registration, and forms.
- Discuss with students the dress code and expectations for conference

At Conference

- Make sure participants are always adhering to the conference schedule.
- Help control undertone during meetings from all participants, not just members of your delegation.
- Enforce dress code for your participants.
- May confiscate cell phones being used by participants during meetings. Phones will be turned over to Y-Staff to be picked up by the participant's advisor after that meeting or by the participants at the end of the conference.
- Please know where your participants are always and are respecting delegates and other advisors
- Please refrain from using computers, phones, headphones, etc. or talking loudly while participants are in sessions
- Advisors set the tone for all participants at the conference

Behavioral Incidents

If state or federal law is broken, Y-Staff will notify parent/guardian and law enforcement and participant will be sent home. If code of conduct rule is violated, advisors and/or Y-Staff may take disciplinary actions at their discretion, including, but not limited to:

- Calls to parent/guardian
- Incident report filled out, signed
- Participant sent home
- School policies implemented

Dress Code

Professional business formal is expected during the conference. This can include a business suit, dress pants, dress, blouse, and other appropriate clothing. Shoes should be appropriate for the outfit and comfortable for walking throughout the day.