

# Tennessee Secretary of State

## *Blue Book Lesson Plans*

### Tennessee General Assembly: Legislators & Legislation

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**Grade Level:** High School, U.S. Government and Civics

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For additional lesson plans, click [here](#).



*There are a limited number of hard copies of Blue Books available. To see about ordering a set for your classroom, please contact the Secretary of State's office at (615) 741-2819 or one of your local legislators. The online version of the Blue Book is also available [here](#).*

#### **Introduction:**

There are 33 members of the State Senate in Tennessee. There are 99 members of the State House of Representatives. Each represents a specific district. Who are your representatives and what are they doing in Nashville? What kind of legislation are your representatives sponsoring? This lesson draws on information found in the *Tennessee Blue Book* and on the General Assembly website.

#### **Guiding Questions:**

- Who represents me in the State House?
- Who represents me in the State Senate?
- What bills have they proposed, sponsored, or co-sponsored?
- What bills have they passed?

**Learning Objectives:** In the course of this lesson, students will...

- Find their state senator and state representative using the *Tennessee Blue Book*.
- See what legislation their representatives in government sponsored or co-sponsored.
- Analyze the bills to see if they agree with them or not.
- Discuss the impact of each piece of legislation.

Page 1 of 4

## Curriculum Standards:

**GC.62** - Identify current representatives (per the student's respective district) in the Tennessee General Assembly and research their past and current proposed legislation that has significantly impacted the lives of Tennesseans. (P, TN)

## Materials Needed:

- *Tennessee Blue Book* or access to the online version (PDFs provided)
  - [pgs. 7 – 50, Senate Members](#)
  - [pg. 52, Senate District Map](#)
  - [pgs. 55 – 164, House Members](#)
  - [pgs. 140 – 141, House District Map](#)
- Access to the General Assembly website ([www.capitol.tn.gov](http://www.capitol.tn.gov))

**Note to teacher:** if internet access is limited, teachers could print out select bills ahead of time for students to analyze

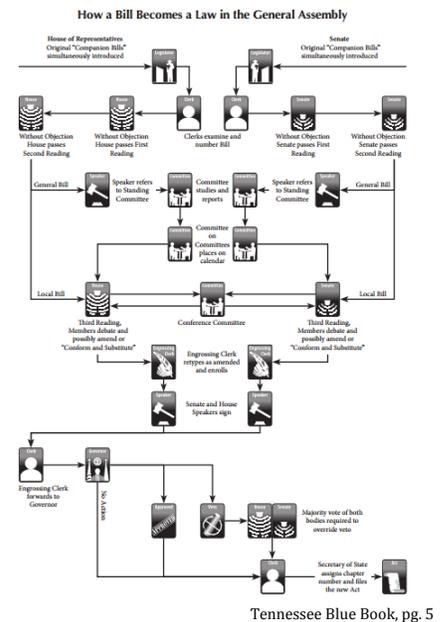
- Signs (on chart paper): Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree

## Background:

- Students should have a basic understanding of the workings of the Tennessee General Assembly and how a bill becomes a law.
- Below are some resources about the lawmaking process:
  - [How a Bill Becomes a Law](#) (General Assembly website)
  - How a Bill Becomes a Law in the General Assembly ([Tennessee Blue Book pg. 5](#))
  - [Committees](#) (General Assembly website)

## Lesson Activities:

- 1) Using the *Tennessee Blue Book*, students will determine which district they live in and who their senator and representative are in each body. To help students find their representatives, below are district maps to pass out or show on the projector. In addition to that, students (or the teacher) can visit [capitol.tn.gov](http://capitol.tn.gov) and put their address into “Find My Legislator.”



- [Senate District Map](#)
  - [House District Map](#)
- 2) Working individually or in groups, students can find information (personal information, committee assignments, and community involvement) about their legislators in the *Tennessee Blue Book* or online.
  - 3) Have students find the bills that their legislator sponsored during the last legislative session, under their profile on the General Assembly's website, click on "Bills Sponsored & Co-sponsored" on the right-hand side.

**Note to teacher:** You may want to preview the bills beforehand and assign them to students/groups so students aren't analyzing the same ones. It is important to note that the number of bills passed, filed or not filed is not a metric of the impact of the legislator or legislation. Encourage students to go deeper in their research of the legislation.

- 4) Have the students take notes in preparation to present their findings to the class. Here are some items to note:

- Bill numbers (House & Senate)
- Description
- Committee assignment
- Public Act vs. Private Act
- Whom the legislation affects
- Cost/fiscal notes
- Amendments



- 5) While students are researching, in each of the four corners of the room post one of the following signs: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree.
- 6) Each student/group will present their bill to the class. After learning about the bill students should choose one corner that represents how they feel about it. Once each student has found their place, have the students discuss among their group why they agree or disagree, and if they feel this bill will have a positive result for Tennesseans. During the discussion students may change their mind and want to move to another group. Some students may find themselves between the corners, which can bring a different perspective to the classroom.
  - **Note to teacher:** If you find that your students bunch together or stick with friends, you can do all of the bill presentations and have students write how they feel on a piece of paper. This can sometimes alleviate the peer pressure and allow students to respond with how they really feel instead of doing what all of their friends are doing.

- Depending on the amount of time you have for this lesson you can make adjustments on how many bills to include, amount of time for each presentation, and amount of time for discussion within the groups.
- 7) To conclude the lesson, have each student choose two or three of the bills that were discussed. Write an essay that answers the following questions:
- What are the key points of each bill?
  - Why are these bills and the issues they address important?
  - How will this legislation impact the lives of Tennesseans?
  - Do you agree or disagree with this legislation? Explain.

### **Extending the Lesson:**

- 1) Look at the personal profile of your representatives (personal information, committee assignments, and community involvement). From that information consider how it has affected their choices of bills to sponsor. Determine if you think there is a correlation.
- 2) From this personal information and previous bills sponsored/co-sponsored, consider what bills you think your legislators might consider next.
- 3) Either as individuals or in groups, brainstorm ideas for legislation related to issues in your district that might be appropriate and should be considered by your legislators.

Option for extension: Invite state legislators or local elected officials to come speak to the classroom about their role in government.