

Lawmaking in Georgia

At a Glance

Time: 45 m	Grade Level: 2-12
Description: This program reviews Georgia's lawmaking process. Students will learn the entire process a bill undergoes before becoming a law, and the role that the executive, legislative, and judicial branch play in lawmaking.	
Standards: SS2CG1, SS3CG1, SS8CG2, L6-8RHSS3, SSCG3	
Objectives: Participants learn which people are involved in making Georgia's laws. Participants learn the process bills undergo before becoming laws. Participants evaluate the state's lawmaking	
Supplies: Paper and/or slideshow	
Bibliography: Georgia state constitution, https://sos.ga.gov/admin/files/Constitution_2013_Final_Printed.pdf Courts 101: An Understanding of the Courts Institute, IJIS Institute, https://www.fjc.gov/sites/default/files/2015/Courts%20101%20An%20Understanding%20of%20the%20Court%20System.pdf	
Essential Questions: 1. Who makes Georgia's laws? 2. Why are multiple branches of government involved in making Georgia's laws? 3. How does the current lawmaking system balance efficiency, fairness, and democratic engagement?	

Sample Script

Today we will be talking about the lawmaking process in Georgia. First, we will review what you already know.

Option: Watch “Lawmaking in Georgia”

Intro discussion:

What is a law?

A law is a rule that a government makes and enforces. Constitutional laws are applied equally to all citizens.

How does every law begin?

Every law starts as an idea.

Who can come up with an idea for a law?

Anyone and everyone can come up with an idea for a law.

Which branch of government is responsible for making laws?

The legislative branch writes the laws.

What is Georgia’s legislature collectively known as?

Georgia legislators are called the Georgia General Assembly.

The Georgia General Assembly is divided into two parts, what do we call those parts?

The Georgia General Assembly is divided into the House of Representatives (the lower house) and the Senate (the upper house).

How many members are in the Georgia House of Representatives?

There are 180 members of the House of Representatives.

How many members are in the Georgia Senate?

There are 56 state senators in Georgia.

Where are laws passed by the Georgia General Assembly enforced?

Georgia laws are only enforced within the state of Georgia.

Because anyone and everyone can come up with an idea for a law, a law can start anywhere. If someone outside of the legislature comes up with an idea for a law, they must first find a legislator (state representative or senator) so that they can share it. Each legislator is assigned a district in the state of Georgia. There are 180 districts in the House of Representatives and 56 districts for the Senate. Each Georgian has exactly one Senator and one Representative. How many of you know the names of the state lawmakers that represent you here at the state Capitol?

Optional Activity: Find your Legislators

Take a moment to look up which state lawmakers represent the district in which your school is located. Give extra credit to students who research the lawmakers that represent their home address.

After an idea for a law is written down, brought to the Capitol, dropped in the “hopper” to be read, it becomes a bill. A bill can begin in either the House or Senate – unless it is related to taxes and revenue, then it must start in the House. Before a bill can become a law, both chambers of the Georgia General Assembly must approve of the same version.

A numbered guide to the lawmaking process:

1. The bill starts in House of Representatives where it goes through the “first reading.”
2. The House of Representatives assigns the bill to a committee.
3. The bill undergoes its “second reading.” The House committee members can vote to make changes, vote to approve the bill, or vote to kill the bill. The bill needs a simple majority (50% + 1) to pass this stage.
4. If the bill makes it through committee, then it moves to the Rules Committee. The Rules Committee decides which bills will be voted “up or down” by the full House chamber.
This stage is known as the “third reading.” The “first reading” happened before the Speaker assigned the bill to a committee, and the “second reading” occurred after bill was assigned to the committee. The bill can now be debated and amended by House members.
5. House members vote on the bill. A regular bill needs a simple majority (50% of the House membership + 1) to pass this stage. In other words, a regular bill requires 91 votes to pass. The Speaker of the House can break a tied vote.
6. If the bill passes the House of Representatives, then it is sent to the Senate.
7. The Lieutenant Governor assigns the bill to a committee.
8. Senate committee members can vote to make changes, approve, or kill the bill. The bill needs a simple majority (50% + 1) to pass this stage.
9. If the bill makes it through the committee, it then comes to the Senate floor for debates and amendments.

10. Senators vote on the bill. A regular bill requires a simple majority (50% + 1) of lawmakers present to pass this stage.

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11. If the bill is passed with changes, then it must return to the House where the process begins again.

12. If the bill is approved without changes it goes to the governor's desk.

13. The governor has the power to approve or veto the bill. If he "leaves it on his desk" and does not sign or veto the bill, the bill will automatically become a law at the end of legislative session.

**Why would the governor do this?*

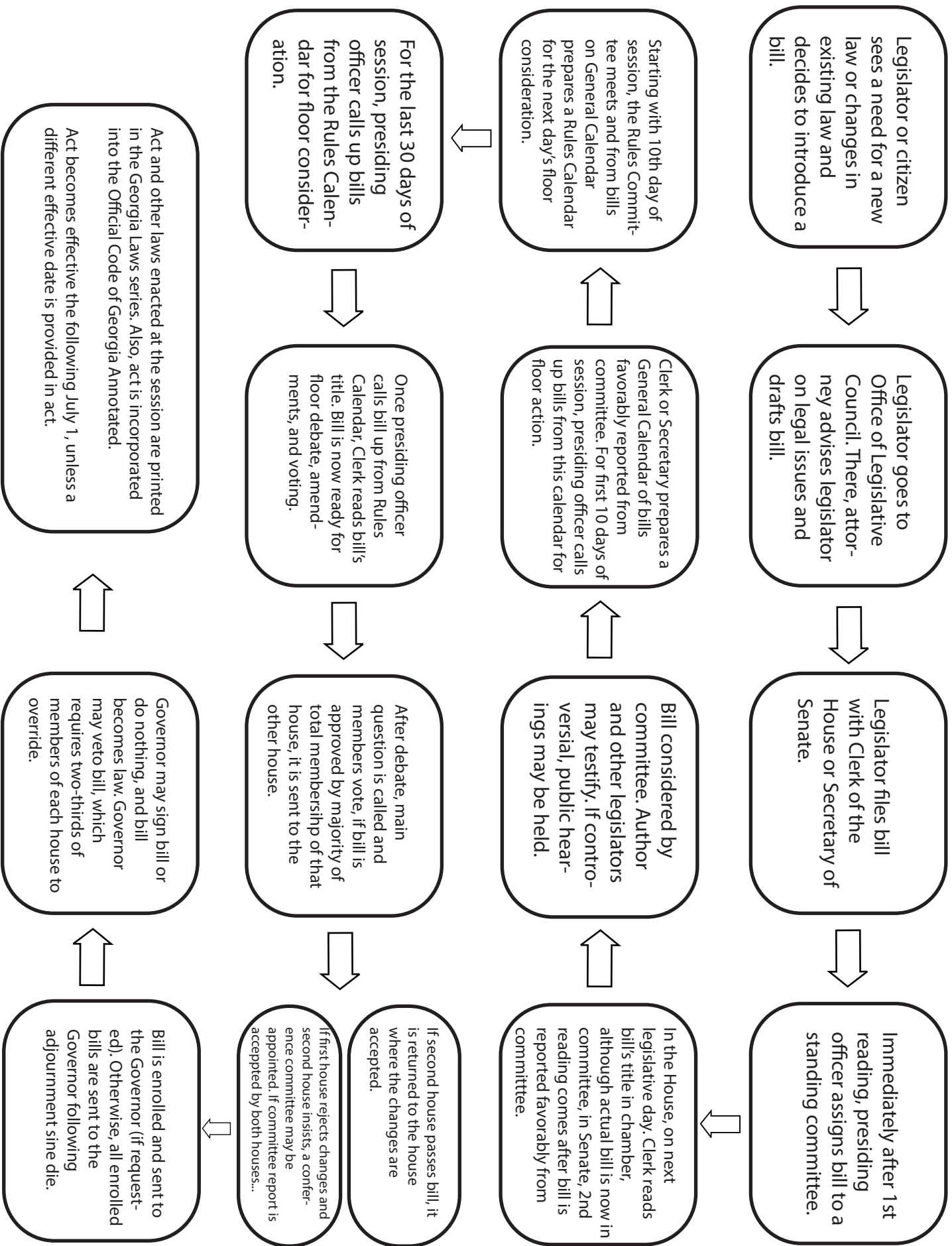
14. If the governor signs a bill, it becomes a state law!

15. If the governor vetoes a bill, the state legislature needs a 2/3 majority to override the veto. This must be done by the same legislators that originally passed the bill, so once a new legislature is sworn in the bill will die.

16. If the legislators fail to gain a 2/3 majority, they can wait until the next legislative session and resubmit the bill or give up entirely.

17. If a bill passes through the legislative and executive branch, citizens can still challenge the legislation through the court system. If state or federal courts decide that the law is unconstitutional, then it is "struck down" and ruled invalid.

**What are some examples of laws being struck down in the state or federal supreme court for their unconstitutionality?*



Activity 1: *Mock Legislature*

If size allows, divide the class into two groups. Have each group come up with one bill. After a group approves their bill, then they must pass it to the other group. When both groups have agreed on the same bill, then it goes to the governor. *The role of governor can be assigned to a student, teacher, or adult in the class.*

Activity 2: *Discussion*

- 1. How can the current lawmaking process be made more efficient?**
- 2. How can the current lawmaking process be made fairer?**
- 3. How can the current lawmaking process be made more democratic?**
- 4. How can it involve more citizen participation?**
- 5. How does the current lawmaking process balance efficiency, fairness, and democratic engagement?**

Take Home Activities

Find your legislators use https://openstates.org/find_your_legislator/ to find your legislator by entering your address.

Write your own law Think of a problem in your community that you would like to solve. Research what level of government is responsible for that issue (for example, a city council may place a stop sign, but the state legislature can make laws requiring drivers to stay off their phones.) Write a law and identify where in government to send your idea.

Fill in flow chart Using the worksheets, have students correctly fill in the lawmaking flow chart.

Create your own lawmaking process Take a moment to outline your own lawmaking process. Do you think only one legislative house needs to approve of laws? Would you like the Supreme Court of Georgia to have more of a role in lawmaking? Create your own list of steps for making a law in your own hypothetical democratic republic.