The Bus Bill

Trace a proposal through Congress and the White House.

SS24.USG.4c "Outline the process by which a bill becomes a law, including introduction, committee review, floor debate, lobbyist actions, voting in both chambers, and presidential action."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each official step from introduction through presidential action, and number the steps in order. Circle the two lobbyists' requests to distinguish advocacy from government decisions.

A Proposal for Cleaner Buses

1. Imagine a bill that would help communities replace aging school buses with cleaner models. A representative introduces the proposal in the House, where it receives a bill number and is referred to a committee. Committee members study costs, hear testimony, propose amendments, and decide whether to send the bill to the full House. Outside the committee room, a bus manufacturer's lobbyist asks lawmakers to increase funding for new vehicles. A public health group's lobbyist urges them to prioritize districts with heavy air pollution. These advocates can supply arguments and information, but neither can cast a congressional vote.

2. If the committee advances the bill, House members debate it on the floor and may propose further changes under House rules. They vote, and a majority of members voting must approve it for the bill to pass the House. The Senate must also consider the proposal, often through its own committee and then floor debate and a vote. Suppose senators approve a version with less funding than the House version. Both chambers must agree on identical wording before the bill can go to the president. They may negotiate a compromise, then each chamber votes on the final text.

3. Once both chambers pass the same text, the bill reaches the president. The president can sign it, making it law, or veto it and return it to Congress with objections. A veto does not necessarily end the proposal: Congress can override it with a two-thirds vote in each chamber. In this school bus example, the president might question whether federal grants cover maintenance as well as purchases. Lawmakers could respond by trying to override a veto or by writing a revised bill and starting the legislative process again. A president cannot simply rewrite the approved bill before signing it.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Trace the bill from its introduction to its first House vote. What official steps occur between those points?

2. How do the two lobbyists try to affect the bill's path, and what part of that path is closed to them?

3. The Senate passes a version with less funding than the House version. Outline what must happen before the bill goes to the president.

4. Once the bill reaches the president, outline two possible presidential actions and how Congress could respond to a veto.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A new bill would fund safer railroad crossings. In 7 to 9 sentences, trace its possible path from introduction to law, including committee review, a lobbyist's action, floor debate, votes in both chambers, how different versions become identical, and presidential action.

ANSWER KEY

The Bus Bill

GRADE 12 · SS24.USG.4c

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each official step from introduction through presidential action, and number the steps in order. Circle the two lobbyists' requests to distinguish advocacy from government decisions. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Trace the bill from its introduction to its first House vote. What official steps occur between those points?	**After introduction, a House committee reviews the bill and decides whether to advance it. House members then debate it on the floor before voting.**
2	How do the two lobbyists try to affect the bill's path, and what part of that path is closed to them?	**One asks for more funding for vehicles; the other asks lawmakers to prioritize districts with heavy air pollution. Neither can vote in Congress.**
3	The Senate passes a version with less funding than the House version. Outline what must happen before the bill goes to the president.	**The chambers must agree on identical wording, perhaps by negotiating a compromise, and each must vote to pass the final text.**
4	Once the bill reaches the president, outline two possible presidential actions and how Congress could respond to a veto.	**The president can sign the bill into law or veto and return it. Congress can override the veto with a two-thirds vote in each chamber.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A representative introduces a bill to fund safer railroad crossings in the House. A House committee hears testimony, changes the funding formula, and advances the bill. A rail industry lobbyist asks members to fund more warning lights, but does not vote. The House debates the bill on the floor and votes to pass it. A Senate committee reviews the proposal, and senators debate and pass a version with a smaller budget. Negotiators from both chambers agree on one compromise text, which the House and Senate each vote to approve. The identical bill goes to the president, who signs it into law.

Accept either chamber as the starting point in Part 3. The account must show that both chambers approve identical final wording before presidential action; a lobbyist's request is not a congressional vote.