

Track a Bill Through the Oregon Legislature, 2025

Lesson Overview:

Each Oregonian is represented by a single Senator and a single Representative in the state legislature, which gathers in Salem, each January. Oregon's legislative assembly consists of a 60-member House of Representatives and a 30-member Senate, serving for two and four year terms, respectively. Each of the 90 members must be United States citizens, at least 21 years old, and have lived in the legislative district from which they were elected for at least a year. The main duty of the Oregon Legislature is to "enact new laws and revise existing ones relating to the health, education and general welfare of Oregonians, and to make decisions that keep the state in good economic and environmental condition," according to its [website](#). The Legislature is also responsible for the state budget. This lesson takes students into the state lawmaking process and shows them how to follow and interact with this process, using a bill considered in the 2025 session. We hope this lesson teaches students (and teachers) how to participate in their state government and make their voices heard beyond just voting.

Duration of the Lesson:

90 minutes, minimum to introduce, but students will need to follow the bill through the session

Materials List:

- Student internet access to the Oregon State Legislature's Information System <https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2025R1/2025-01-13>
- Student copies (electronic or physical) of the "Track a Bill" in the Oregon Legislature

2024 Oregon Social Sciences Standards

- X. Apply the practices and knowledge of social science to determine the most effective ways to take informed civic action
- 4.C.PI.1 Investigate the creation of the Oregon constitution and identify its key components.
- 8.C.PI.8 Examine the interconnection of governing power and responsibility in the system of checks and balances.
- 8.C.DP.11 Analyze issues involving liberty in conflict with equality or authority, individual rights in conflict with the common good, or majority rule in conflict with minority rights.
- HS.C.PI.3 Examine and compare institutions, functions, and processes of government.
- HS.C.CE.17 Explain how active citizens and political or social movements can affect the lawmaking process locally, nationally, and internationally.

Learning Objectives:

Students will be able to...

- Know the difference between a bill and a law
- Explain why a legislative process has multiple steps
- Follow a bill they are interested in and learn how the public provides comments

Essential Questions:

- How are laws made in a representative democracy?
- How can Oregonians follow and participate in the processes of making laws?

Procedure:

Time	Activity
15 minutes	<p><u>Activate Prior Knowledge:</u> Teachers, have students do a 5 min. Quickwrite answering the following question: <i>Should it be easy to make a law? Why or why not?</i> Then, discuss it as a class. The teacher can use the following questions to prompt conversation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the advantage of having new ideas go through so much process to become law? • Do you think an emergency would lead to more agreement between legislators and therefore, speed this process up? • Do you think it's fair that a governor can veto a bill after it survives all the prior processes of approval? • When a minority party faces a supermajority opposition, what do you think their best approach would be for having their concerns considered?
10 minutes	<p><u>Direct instruction:</u> Many students may not have much of an idea of what happens in Salem in our capitol. So, take them on this interactive virtual tour of the building to show them where laws are made in Oregon. 360° CAPITOL TOUR, available in English, Spanish and Mandarin https://oregoncapitolfoundation.org/project/capitol-virtual-tour/ Then have them examine the graphic organizer at the bottom of this page: How Ideas Become Law, Oregon State Legislature: https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/citizen_engagement/Pages/How-an-Idea-Becomes-Law.aspx and this simplified version: How Does a Bill Become A Law, Oregon State Capitol</p>
20 minutes	<p><u>Guided Instruction:</u> Next, ensure students understand the bill's language and what the Legislature will be considering. Clarify any points of confusion. They may have ideas for how to improve the bill. They may want to provide testimony!</p>
5 minutes	<p><u>Independent Practice:</u> Navigate to the OLIS link for 2025: https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2025R1/2025-01-13 Click on Bills at the top Search for HB 2251</p>
30 min	<p><u>Formative Assessment</u> Complete the "Track A Bill" in Oregon worksheet below on HB 2251 If you are doing this lesson early in the session, there may not yet be staff summaries, hearings scheduled, or testimony provided yet. It may take a couple months to move forward.</p>
10 min	<p><u>Closure</u> Have students gather in groups of four to compare what they learned about the bill, what they think will be the outcome, and what they learned about the legislative process. OR Teachers could ask students for an exit ticket summarizing how a bill becomes a law.</p>



Assessment(s):

- For an additional assessment, have students independently look in the OLIS for a topic they are interested in and inquire about a bill they care about and write a reflection on what happened and how they feel about it.
- Have students write to their legislator about an issue being considered by the Oregon Legislature. Many of the bills did not make it out of committee this short session and will come up again next year during the long session. They can each find their representatives here:
<https://geo.maps.arcgis.com/apps/instant/lookup/index.html?appid=fd070b56c975456ea2a25f7e3f4289d1>

Modifications/Variations:

- You can show a video of Senate or House hearings, committee meetings, etc. from the OLIS Measure History and Meetings sections in the bill information. These are not exciting to watch but can illustrate an abstract idea of what's actually going on in Salem.
- For elementary students, the famous Schoolhouse Rock music video, "I'm Just a Bill" could be a nice start (make sure to point out the difference between a national capitol and a state capitol).
https://youtu.be/SZ8psP4S6BQ?si=OLXt_ej-dPIEtoSm

Lesson Recommendations:

Pre Teach the following words/concepts as needed:

- **Legislature:** the group of people in a country or part of a country who have the power to make and change laws
- **Legislation:** a law or set of laws that is being created or the process of making laws
- **Bill:** a proposal for a new law
- **Law:** a rule, usually made by a government, that states how people may and may not behave in a society, and often orders particular punishments if they do not obey
- **Bicameral legislature:** a legislature divided into two chambers, or houses. In Oregon's case, they are called the House of Representatives and the Senate.
- **Legislative testimony:** a formal statement made by a witness or organization before a legislative committee. It is a sworn statement of facts that can be presented orally or in writing.
- **Amendment:** a change or addition

Lesson Reflections:

What worked well in the lesson? Why?	
What would I modify for future implementation?	

Lesson Plan Adapted From:

Developed by CLP staff



Track a Bill in Oregon

Start at: <https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2025R1/2025-01-13>

Bill Number	
Sponsors <i>Was this bill sponsored by legislators from one party or does it have bipartisan support</i>	
Summary <i>Copy it down here</i>	
Committees <i>What committee was the bill sent to, if any? Were there hearings?</i>	
Costs? Revenue and Fiscal Impacts <i>Will it increase taxes or pull any money from the existing budget?</i>	
Amendments <i>How many were proposed? Were any adopted? If so, what changes were made?</i>	
Testimony <i>Approximately how many Oregonians submitted comments on this bill? Were most in support or opposed to the bill from what you can tell? Were the comments from all over the state or mostly one region?</i> <i>Pick a person's testimony IN SUPPORT of the bill and read it. What is the person's main message about this bill? What evidence/support did they provide to support their argument?</i> <i>Pick a person's testimony OPPOSING the bill and read it. What is the person's main message about this bill? What evidence/support did they provide to support their argument?</i>	
Measure History <i>Where did the process end for this bill?</i>	
You <i>Would you have opposed or supported this bill? Why?</i>	