Mr. Kay’s American Government

Mini Lesson: **You are a member of Congress, interest group, or media member. What do you do?**

**Objectives of this lesson**

This classroom simulation of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce allows students to understand the procedures and political process of committee action on a bill.  Students play the roles of Republican and Democratic committee members with four different views on raising the minimum wage.  After hearing arguments of opposing interest groups in a committee hearing, committee members attempt to forge a bipartisan majority through political bargaining and compromise on a bill to increase the minimum wage. This activity will reinforce instruction on congressional committees in the lawmaking process, and the role of parties and interest groups in this process.

**Learning Targets:**

\*Students will be able to play the roles of Republican and Democratic committee members with four different views on raising the minimum wage.

\*Students will be able to discuss the arguments in favor of and opposed to minimum wage laws.  
\*Students will be able to understand the procedures and political process of committee action on a bill as an active participate in the classroom simulation of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce.

\*Students will be able to forge a bipartisan majority through political bargaining after hearing arguments of opposing interest groups in a committee hearing  
\*Students will be able to explain what happens to a bill on the House floor, and identify the final step in the passage of a bill in the House.

**LESSON PLAN**

**Wednesday, December 9th:** I chose two groups to assume the roles of witnesses for the committee hearing.  One group was chosen to represent the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the other the AFL-CIO.  Each group researched in depth his or her interest group’s position on raising the minimum wage and prepared a five to ten minute statement to advocate this position.

1. Each group given a role and given a printed role description (found in the [Appendix](http://www.congresslink.org/print_lp_congcommsim_miniwage_append.htm)).

I as the teacher will assume the role of committee chairman but will exercise this role in a non-partisan way and will refrain from voting.

3. Passed out and review copies of HR 555 (Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2014) and [data about the minimum wage](http://www.congresslink.org/print_lp_congcommsim_miniwage_hr666.htm#data) on the other.

4. Students reviewed various positions on minimum wage laws found in the role descriptions sheet that was given to them.  Explained that since about a fourth of the committee members support each position, bargaining and compromise will need to occur to achieve a majority vote.  I suggested some strategies.

**Thursday, December 10th:**

Explained during the simulation that there will be a committee hearing where committee members will listen to the testimony of representatives from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the AFL-CIO.  On Friday students will be participating in a mark-up session where the committee will have the chance to modify HR 555 by offering amendments.  I assigned each group the task of preparing either a question to ask one of the witnesses during the hearing or an amendment to offer during the mark-up session.  There is a place on the handout for writing these.  I announced that I plan to assign an assessment grade for this activity based on the students’ participation and accurate role-playing, and that I will keep track of how often and how effectively they speak.

**Friday, December 11th:**

Democrats should sit with one another and Republicans should sit with one another, with the chairman (teacher) being in front of them. Witnesses when presenting should face the congress members and the members of the media.

I as the teacher will read and follow the [script for the chairman](http://www.congresslink.org/print_lp_congcommsim_miniwage_script.htm).

The student should have their forms - [H.R. 555 - In the House of Representatives: A Bill](http://www.congresslink.org/print_lp_congcommsim_miniwage_hr666.htm) and [Amendment](http://www.congresslink.org/print_lp_congcommsim_miniwage_amendment.htm) proposals filled out in dollar amounts and effective dates as each amendment is offered. Before the session begins, I will encourage the students to offer an amendment that indexes the minimum wage to inflation.  The wording for such an amendment is given in the attached [Amendment](http://www.congresslink.org/print_lp_congcommsim_miniwage_amendment.htm).

Sequence of events of today’s lesson:

**1. The committee hearing:**

The House Committee on Education and the Workforce will please come to order in class.

The first group of speakers representing the U.S. Chamber of Commerce will then speak as expert witnesses on why the minimum wage should not increase. This will be followed by questions from the members of congress and the media.

The second group of speakers representing the AFL-CIO as expert witnesses on why the minimum wage should be increased will have five to ten minutes to present their position on this bill, followed by questions from the members of congress and the media.

2. **Congress members present discuss and debate:**

Each group of the members congress will now have the option of having three to five minutes to make their arguments for or against on HR 555 (Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2014).

Then any member who wishes to offer an amendment may do so after the opening statements have been made.

There will be time allotted to debate any proposed amendments.

If there are any amendments to HR 555, I as the chairman (teacher) will then call for a vote on Amendment.

Each group of the two political parties will have an opportunity to meet with their parties’ caucus before voting begins.

Votes will be tallied by collection of the pieces of paper.

3. **HR 555 (Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2015) Passes or Does not Pass**

There will be an announcement of the final vote by the chairman and a brief discussion will follow.

**Overview of Lesson Experience:**

The experience will serve as a valuable reflection of the reality of committee action in Congress.

The students will have learned how to facilitate bargaining and compromise and be able to call for occasional recesses to allow informal discussion if you sense that these would be useful.  The students were encouraged to be the committee leaders and bill co-sponsors and to be actively involved in this political process.  The committee of students will attempt to achieve majority support for some amended version of HR 555.

**Debriefing:**

Next class will be debriefing students on their experience.  I will ask students what they learned from the simulation and what it reveals about the lawmaking process.  I will add my own observations and reflections.

**RESOURCES**

http://www.congresslink.org/images/menu-arrow.gif Handouts

http://www.congresslink.org/images/menu-arrow.gif Overhead projector

http://www.congresslink.org/images/menu-arrow.gif [Appendix: Role Descriptions](http://www.congresslink.org/print_lp_congcommsim_miniwage_append.htm)

http://www.congresslink.org/images/menu-arrow.gif [Script: Chairman (Teacher)](http://www.congresslink.org/print_lp_congcommsim_miniwage_script.htm)

http://www.congresslink.org/images/menu-arrow.gif [H.R. 555 - In the House of Representatives: A Bill](http://www.congresslink.org/print_lp_congcommsim_miniwage_hr666.htm)

http://www.congresslink.org/images/menu-arrow.gif [Amendment](http://www.congresslink.org/print_lp_congcommsim_miniwage_amendment.htm)

More information found at:

<http://mrkay.weebly.com/us-government.html>

<http://mrkay.weebly.com/lessons-and-learning-activities-on-minimumliving-wage-american-government.html>