



How a Bill Becomes a Law

These resources for all ages explore the bill-to-law process and provide access to information on current and draft legislation.

Online Resources

LawCraft from iCivics

<https://www.icivics.org/games/lawcraft>

See what it's like for members of Congress to pass legislation as you play this game, in which you take on the persona of a Congressman attempting to get a bill turned into a law.

Legislation Text from Congress.gov

<https://www.congress.gov/quick-search/legislation-text>

Read legislation from current and past congresses.

The Legislative Process from the United States House of Representatives

https://www.house.gov/content/learn/legislative_process/

Explore how laws are made from the perspective of a United States Representative.

The Legislative Process: How a Bill Becomes a Federal Law from Annenberg Classroom

<https://goo.gl/rLRyRo>

The Lenore Annenberg Institute for Civics presents videos on how a bill becomes a law, lesson plans including discussion questions and other resources, and a game that immerses players in the workings of our three branches of government.

The Legislative Process: Overview from Congress.gov

<https://www.congress.gov/legislative-process>

This government resource provides an explanation of the legislative process via videos created by the Library of Congress.





Further Reading for Adults

Encyclopedia of the United States Congress

by Robert E. Dewhirst

328.73003 D

This comprehensive A-to-Z volume contains all the material needed to understand the United States Congress, including the people, events, and terms involved in the legislative branch of government.

Fighting for Common Ground: How We Can Fix the Stalemate in Congress

by Olympia Snowe

In this call to action, former United States Senator from Maine Snowe explores the roots of her belief in principled policy-making and bipartisan compromise.

The Legislative Branch of Federal Government: People, Process, and Politics

by Gary P. Gershman

This book looks at the evolution of the U.S. Congress over the past 225+ years, describing its current structure, responsibilities, and daily operations.

The U.S. Congress: A Very Short Introduction

by Donald A. Ritchie

328.73 R PBK

Ritchie, a congressional historian for more than thirty years, takes readers on a behind-the-scenes tour of Capitol Hill, pointing out the key players, explaining their behavior, and translating parliamentary language into plain English.





Further Reading for Youth

The Congress: A Look at the Legislative Branch

by Robin Nelson and Sandy Donovan

J 328.73 N

This volume discusses the origin of the legislative branch, its purpose, and how a bill becomes a law.

How a Law Is Passed by Bill Scheppler

J 328.73077 S

This book puts readers at the heart of the law-making action by tracking the progress of laws, from proposals in Congress, through debates in the House of Representatives and the Senate, to approval by the president.

How Do Laws Get Passed? by Leslie Harper

J 328.73077 H

Learn all about laws and law making processes, including answers to questions about laws, why laws are in place, who makes laws, and how laws are written and passed.

How the Legislative Branch Works by Maddie Spaulding

J 328.73 S

Learn how a bill becomes a law and how the U.S. Congress helps maintain the government's balance of power.





What Is Journalism? (And What Isn't?)

When you're watching or reading the news, it isn't always clear what is fact and what is opinion. These resources can help you navigate the landscape of reporting versus commentary and understand journalistic ethics.

Conversation Questions

1. What combination of news, opinion, and analysis do information consumers need in order to be well-informed?
2. How can an information source like a news service demonstrate that it provides trustworthy information?
3. Family question: How should news sources help readers tell the difference between news and opinion?

Key Definitions (from Merriam-Webster)

- *Journalism* – the collection and editing of news for presentation through the media
- *News* – a report of recent events
- *Opinion* – a view, judgment, or appraisal formed in the mind about a particular matter
- *Analysis* – a detailed examination of anything complex in order to understand its nature or to determine its essential features

Read

“The Difference between News, Opinion and Analysis” from *The Speaker*

<https://goo.gl/AfVCDz>

The Speaker, a collaborative journalism project meant to provide news on under-reported issues, outlines the difference between news, opinion, and analysis while providing examples of each.

“Better Design Helps Differentiate Opinion and News” by Rachel Schallom

<https://goo.gl/zEEJ6E>

The NiemanLab discusses how journalism is using design techniques to help readers tell news from commentary.





**“News or opinion? Online, it’s hard to tell” by
Rebecca Iannucci**

<https://goo.gl/4FUe7z>

Researcher Rebecca Iannucci shares findings of a study examining the ways internet news sites label—or don’t—their articles to help readers tell what is news coverage and what isn’t.

“SPJ Code of Ethics” from the Society of Professional Journalists

<https://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp>

The Society of Professional Journalists offers the code of ethics for news reporting and dissemination, including tenets to “seek truth and report it” and “be accountable and transparent.”

**“Tale of 2 polls: What do librarians have that journalists don’t?”
by David Beard**

<https://goo.gl/CnK9Nk>

This article digs into a recent set of polls showing that public opinion of journalists has decreased while that of another information profession—librarians—has increased.

Listen

“Breaking News” from Radiolab

<http://www.radiolab.org/story/breaking-news/>

This podcast episode ventures into the arena of journalistic ethics in a technological landscape where simulated news reports—seemingly from people in positions of authority—can spread misinformation on a wide scale.

“It’s All Journalism”

<https://player.fm/series/its-all-journalism>

This podcast series tackles the trends in journalism in a world of digital media. Interviews with working journalists shed light on how the profession views their work and responsibility.





Voting Basics

Do you know how to register to vote and where to vote? Let's explore some of the ins and outs of voting.

If a citizen has a felony conviction, can they vote?

In Illinois, individuals incarcerated for a felony conviction are ineligible to vote while they are in prison. Voting rights are automatically restored upon release from prison, and people on parole or probation are eligible to re-register and vote.

Source: <https://goo.gl/XB1sW8>

When do I need to re-register to vote?

Your registration is permanent unless you move or change your name.

- Address changes – If you move within suburban Cook County, you must transfer your registration by re-registering. You may write your new address on the back of your voter identification card and mail it to the County Clerk's downtown Chicago office. You must re-register with the new local election authority or county clerk if you move to an address outside suburban Cook County.
- Name changes – If you are legally changing your name at the Secretary of State's office (www.cyberdriveillinois.com), you can ask them to process a new or updated voter registration. If you are changing your name but are not moving—and forget to update your registration—you will be required to fill out an affidavit on Election Day in order to cast your ballot. You will not be able to vote by mail.
- People who have a felony conviction should re-register to vote after release from prison.

Source: <https://goo.gl/QKpqvu>

Is a voter required to register by/with a political party in order to vote?

In Illinois, for a primary election, voters must register with a political party in order to vote. For a general election, no political party registration is required.





Seeing Women and Their Impact

Despite making up at least half the world's population, women are grossly underrepresented in historical and cultural spheres. For every woman mentioned in United States history textbooks, five to seven men are mentioned in the same text.¹ Works by women artists make up between three and five percent of permanent collections in United States and European art museums.² Women's voices and experiences are shared less often than those of men.

These five resources offer first steps toward becoming better acquainted with women who made major impacts throughout history. Take some time to consider the women who have made an impact in your life.

Read

"The Secret History of Women in Coding" by Clive Thompson

<https://goo.gl/Ziksu7>

Thompson, a journalist for *The New York Times*, dives into the history of computer programming. This profession initially included a more equal gender balance than we see in the field today.

Listen

"The History Chicks" from Beckett Graham and Susan Vollenweider

<http://thehistorychicks.com/>

Graham and Vollenweider have been podcasting as The History Chicks since 2011. Their twice monthly episodes are heavily researched chronicles of women from history and literature. Each episode is accompanied by notes and references on their website to inspire further exploration.

¹ Chick, K.A. 2006. Gender balance in K-12 American history textbooks. *Social Studies Research and Practice*, 1 (3), 284-290.

² Chicago, J. 2012. We women artists refuse to be written out of history. *The Guardian*.





Genetic Editing

Agriculture scientists, hobby gardeners, and even dog breeders have used genetic editing tools and techniques for decades. The latest advances in genetic editing hold incredible potential to improve human life as well as living conditions on Earth. CRISPR, a prominent and important genome-editing tool, has potential uses in combatting genetic diseases in humans and revolutionizing the GMO industry. CRISPR's relatively low cost is leading to questions about its potential uses. These resources explore recent information about genetic editing, GMOs, and CRISPR.

Read

"First U.S. Patients Treated With CRISPR As Human Gene-Editing Trials Get Underway" by Rob Stein from NPR.

<https://tinyurl.com/yxg66ykw>

Scientists have taken the first steps in using the CRISPR gene-editing technology to cure diseases with a cancer study involving two patients at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia.

"A simple guide to CRISPR, one of the biggest science stories of the decade" by Brad Plumer, Eliza Barclay, Julia Belluz, and Umair Irfan from Vox

<https://tinyurl.com/y8xdvyxc>

This article provides a comprehensive overview of CRISPR genetic editing, how it is currently being used, and the potential for such technology.

"CRISPR Baby Scientist Comprehensively Denounced by Genetics Experts" by David Grossman from *Popular Mechanics*

<https://tinyurl.com/y4fwka4k>

Two Chinese scientists have taken apart the CRISPR work by He Jiankui, the "CRISPR Baby Scientist" who attempted to use the technology to genetically modify two fetuses.





LGBTQ+ History Timeline: Stonewall to Today

Since the Stonewall riots took place in 1969, the visibility and rights of LGBTQ+ people have continued to improve in the United States. Community members contributed events to our LGBTQ+ history timeline during June 2019 Pride Civic Lab events.

- 1969, June** – Stonewall riots take place in New York City
- 1970, June 28** – First Pride Parade takes place one year after the Stonewall Riots in New York City
- 1973** – Homosexuality is no longer categorized as a mental illness when it is removed from the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*
- 1974** – Kathy Kozachenko becomes the first openly LGBTQ+ American elected to public office (Ann Arbor City Council)
- 1976** – Michigan Womyn's Music Festival takes place for the first time
- 1978** – Harvey Milk becomes the first openly gay man elected office in California (San Francisco Board of Supervisors)
- 1979** – First National March on Washington for Lesbian & Gay Rights
- 1982** – Wisconsin becomes the first state to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation
- 1983** – Lambda Legal wins the first HIV/AIDS discrimination lawsuit
- 1985** – *The Times of Harvey Milk* wins an Academy Award
- 1987** – ACT UP is founded
- 1988, October 11** – First National Coming Out Day
- 1990** – First Gay/Straight Alliance is founded
- 1991** – Chicago establishes the Gay & Lesbian Hall of Fame
- 1993** – Minnesota becomes the first state to ban discrimination of transgender people





- 1995** – The Hate Crimes Sentencing Enhancement Act goes into effect
- 1997** – Rainbow pylons are installed in Boystown
- 1997** – Ellen DeGeneres portrays the first character to come out on primetime television
- 1998** – Tammy Baldwin becomes the first openly LGBTQ+ American elected to Congress (House of Representatives)
- 1999** – The character Willow on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* comes out
- 2000** – Vermont becomes the first state to legalize same-sex civil unions
- 2003** – V. Gene Robinson is the first openly gay clergyman elected bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of New Hampshire
- 2004, May 17** – The first same-sex marriage in the United States takes place in Massachusetts
- 2009** – Expansion of the federal Hate Crime Law
- 2010** – “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” is repealed
- 2011, June 1** – Illinois recognizes same-sex civil unions
- 2014** – Laverne Cox becomes the first transgender person nominated for a primetime Emmy Award
- 2015, June** – The Supreme Court of the United States recognizes same-sex marriage as legal across the country
- 2019, May** – Lori Lightfoot is sworn in as Mayor of Chicago
- 2019, June 9** – Skokie Pride is the first community-wide Pride event in the Village of Skokie





Listen

“Genetically Modified Organisms” from Sawbones

<https://tinyurl.com/yzfxe6k>

Are GMOs dangerous or is genetic modification a desperately needed technology to help humans avoid extinction? Dr. Sydnee McElroy and her husband Justin McElroy talk about genetically modified organisms in this podcast.

“Update: CRISPR” from Radiolab

<http://www.radiolab.org/story/update-crispr/>

Radio program and podcast *Radiolab* combines its initial episode about CRISPR from nearly two years ago with an update on recent developments. Listeners hear from scientists involved in the discovery of the genome-editing tool.

“CRISPR vs. Climate Change” from Base Pairs

<https://goo.gl/xQb8eG>

From Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, this podcast episode includes an interview with a plant scientist who shares how advances in agriculture with CRISPR can help curb the effects of climate change.

Watch

“Biologist Explains One Concept in 5 Levels of Difficulty—CRISPR” from WIRED

<https://goo.gl/bZRhDW>

Biologist Neville Sanjana explains CRISPR to five different people of differing ages and expertise.

Reflect and Share

1. What ethical considerations are associated with genetic editing?
2. How has genetic editing affected your life?
3. How should tools like CRISPR be regulated, and by whom?



The CIVIC LAB at Skokie Public Library offers information and thought-provoking activities to support dialogue and engagement on issues that affect our community.



“Stuff You Missed in History Class” from How Stuff Works

<http://www.missedinhistory.com/tags/women.htm>

This podcast from How Stuff Works dives into the stories that make up U.S. and world history, providing sourced information and historical context in a manner to rival most history lectures. All episodes featuring historical women have been tagged to make searching easy.

Watch

“Ordinary Women: Daring to Defy History” from Feminist Frequency

<https://goo.gl/jW7TZq>

Anita Sarkeesian of the YouTube channel Feminist Frequency shares short biographies of women deserving of historical renown in this video series launched in 2016. “Ordinary Women: Daring to Defy History” was made possible through a crowdfunding campaign.

“Super Women of our Past! #WomensHistoryMonth” from Google for Education

<https://goo.gl/7tjZRC>

This playlist, curated by Google for Education for Women's History Month, features video biographies of U.S. women throughout our nation's history. The videos, ranging from two to seven minutes in length, feature the lives of women artists, scientists, activists, and more.

Reflect and Share

1. What have women in your life accomplished? Have they gotten credit for these accomplishments?
2. What would you say to them to acknowledge what they have accomplished?
3. How can you help to share the stories of women and their work?





What accommodations are available at polling places for voters with accessibility needs?

- Mail ballot – If you are permanently physically incapacitated and unable to make it to your polling place, you qualify to automatically receive an application for a mail ballot before every election for the next five years.
- Touch-screen machines – Every polling place in suburban Cook County has at least one touch-screen voting machine. Voters who are blind or visually impaired or who have limited dexterity are encouraged to use the touch-screen machines. Each touch screen is equipped with an audio track that voters can activate to have the ballot read to them in English, Spanish, Chinese or Hindi. Voters can use a keypad to navigate through the ballot and make selections.
- Seated voting booth – Voters who prefer use an optical scan ballot may vote at the seated voting booth. The seated voting booth has a low tabletop and legs that extend outward to accommodate voters who use wheelchairs. Seniors or other voters who prefer to sit down while voting can also use this booth.
- Voting assistance – If you have difficulty marking an optical scan ballot or making selections on the touch screen, you may request assistance from a friend, relative, or two election judges (one from each party) in your precinct. Under state law, both the voter and the individual(s) providing assistance must sign a legal affidavit at the polling place.
- Curbside voting – You may request to have election materials brought to you in your parked vehicle on Election Day. Election judges (one from each party) will provide you with a ballot at a specified location just outside the building that houses the polling place. Please notify the Clerk's office at least a week before Election Day to request curbside voting.
- Magnifiers – Handheld magnifiers for voters with visual impairments are available at each precinct. Ask an election judge to use one at the polling place.

Source: <https://goo.gl/MPTDjC>





Is straight party voting available in a general election in Illinois?

Straight party voting was abolished in Illinois in 1997.

Is an ID required to vote in Illinois?

Generally, Illinois state law does not require voters to present identification at the polls on Election Day. New voters who did not provide proof of identity at the time of registration may be required to present identification at the polls. Early voters must present photo identification at the polls.

What is my voting residence? Can I vote in an election taking place in a district in which I own property even if I am not a resident?

Your voting residence is the true, fixed address that you consider your permanent home and where you have a physical presence. Your state of legal residence is used for state income tax purposes and determines eligibility to vote for federal and state elections, as well as qualifications for in-state tuition rates. You must be a resident of a district to vote in elections in that district.

Source: <https://goo.gl/yurDHm>

Is electioneering allowed within the polling location?

No. While a polling place is open for the conduct of voting, a person may not electioneer for or against any candidate, measure, or political party in or within 100 feet of an outside door through which a voter may enter the building or structure in which the polling place is located.

