

LOBBYISTS AND YOUTH ADVOCATES

The Leave Behind

CIVICS

GOVERNMENT

PERSUASIVE WRITING

RESEARCH

ETHICS

AT A GLANCE

GRADES	9-12 (adaptable for younger students)
TIME	Four sessions, each 30 minutes long. Pairs well with the Committee Hearing or Floor Debate lesson, since lobbyists need bills to work on.
HANDOUTS	1. Interest Group Cards; 2. Sponsor Interview Sheet; 3. Leave Behind Template; 4. Advocacy Ethics Rules; 5. Vote Tracker

THE STORY PROBLEM

Storybook County's interest groups have discovered the bill book. The Three Pigs Homebuilders Guild loves the building code bill. The Straw and Stick Suppliers Association does not. The Woodland Residents Association, which counts the Big Bad Wolf as a dues-paying member, has opinions on all of it.

► THE PROCESS PRACTICED

Advocacy. YMCA Youth and Government lobbyists and Youth Advocates represent an interest, track the bills that affect it, interview sponsors, prepare a short written "leave behind" for legislators, present pro and con positions, and meet legislators face to face, as the Youth Advocate Program does on its State Advocacy Day. Students learn that influencing a legislature honestly is a skill with rules.

► LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Students will be able to identify an interest group's stake in a bill and state its position in one sentence.
- Students will be able to interview a bill sponsor with prepared questions and record the answers accurately.
- Students will be able to write a one-page leave behind: the ask, three reasons, the evidence, the counterargument answered, and contact information.
- Students will be able to present both a pro and a con position on the same bill fairly.
- Students will be able to explain the ethics rules that separate advocacy from manipulation: tell the truth, disclose who you represent, respect the legislator's time, never offer anything of value.

► MATERIALS:

- The class bill book, or the Sample Bills from the Committee Hearing lesson
- Handout: "Interest Group Cards" (Supporting Document 1)
- Handout: "Sponsor Interview Sheet" (Supporting Document 2)

- Handout: "Leave Behind Template" (Supporting Document 3)
- Handout: "Advocacy Ethics Rules" (Supporting Document 4)
- Handout: "Vote Tracker" (Supporting Document 5)

► PRE-PLANNING:

- **Assign Roles:**
 - **Lobbying Teams** (3 students each): each team draws an Interest Group Card and is assigned one or two bills that affect the group. One student is Principal Lobbyist (leads meetings), one is Researcher (reads bills, interviews sponsors), one is Writer (produces the leave behind).
 - **Legislators** (remaining students): each represents a district and will be lobbied. They receive a short card describing their district's interests so they have reasons to agree or disagree.
 - **Sponsors:** if bills come from earlier lessons, their authors answer interviews; otherwise the teacher plays the sponsor.
- One team should be assigned to argue a position they personally disagree with, to make the point that lobbyists represent clients.

SESSION 1 WHO WANTS WHAT

30 MINUTES

- 5** **Hook.** "The Big Bad Wolf has hired a lobbyist." Ask what that lobbyist's job is. Draw out that it is to represent the Wolf's interest to the people who make the rules, within the rules.
- 10** **Ethics First.** Walk through the Advocacy Ethics Rules. Give the test: would you be comfortable if the Storybook Gazette printed exactly what you said and did? Explain that at the conference, Youth Advocates learn from real registered lobbyists and that disclosure is the first rule.
- 10** **Stake Analysis.** Teams read their Interest Group Card and their bills and write a one-sentence position on each: "The Straw and Stick Suppliers Association opposes Bill A because it bans our product from walls." Then list two things the group would accept as a compromise.
- 5** **Legislator Prep.** Legislators read their district cards and write one question they will ask any lobbyist who visits.

SESSION 2 RESEARCH AND THE SPONSOR INTERVIEW

30 MINUTES

- 5** **Why Interview.** Explain that the best leave behind quotes the sponsor accurately, whether for or against. Lobbyists who misquote lose access.
- 15** **Interviews.** Researchers interview the sponsors of their bills using the Interview Sheet (what problem does the bill solve, what does Section 2 actually require, who pays, what would you change). Sponsors rotate among teams every five minutes.
- 10** **Build the Case.** Teams list three reasons for their position and find one piece of evidence from the story for each (the straw house fell; the brick house did not; the wolf has never been fined under the current Section 7).

SESSION 3 THE LEAVE BEHIND

30 MINUTES

- 5** **Template.** Walk through the one-page Leave Behind Template. The rule: a legislator should understand the ask in ten seconds and the reasons in sixty.

20

Write. Writers draft while Principal Lobbyists prepare a two-minute verbal pitch and Researchers prepare the honest counterargument section, which must state the other side fairly before answering it.

5

Peer Check. Teams swap and check: Is who you represent stated at the top? Is every claim something you could prove from the story? Is the ask a specific vote?

SESSION 4 LOBBY DAY

30 MINUTES

20

Meetings. Legislators sit at stations. Teams rotate through four-minute meetings: introduce yourselves and your client, make the ask, give the three reasons, hand over the leave behind, answer the legislator's question, thank them and leave on time. Teams record each legislator's response on the Vote Tracker (yes, no, leaning, undecided).

5

Pro and Con Presentation. Two teams on opposite sides of the same bill present to the whole class, two minutes each. The class votes by placard on which was more persuasive and which was more honest; the two answers do not have to match.

5

Wrap-Up. Teams tally their trackers and predict the floor vote. Discuss: what moved legislators, evidence or relationships? Did anyone cross an ethics line?

► ASSESSMENT

Position and Stake Analysis

15

Clear, accurate, with a plausible compromise.

Sponsor Interview

15

Questions prepared; answers recorded accurately; sponsor quoted fairly in the leave behind.

Leave Behind

30

Client disclosed; ask specific; three reasons with story evidence; counterargument stated fairly and answered; one page.

Lobby Meetings

25

On time; courteous; ask made; legislator's question answered; tracker completed.

Ethics

15

No misstatements; client disclosed in every meeting; no promises or pressure.

► DIFFERENTIATION

Support

Provide a completed sample leave behind for the Three Pigs Homebuilders Guild. Reduce meetings to two per team.

Challenge

Give one team two clients with conflicting interests and require them to disclose the conflict and decline one. Add a reporter from the Press Corps lesson who attends meetings and may quote anything said.

INTEREST GROUP CARDS

Three Pigs Homebuilders Guild

Builds in brick. Supports any wall or materials rule; opposes anything that raises permit costs for builders.

Straw and Stick Suppliers Association

Sells straw and sticks. Opposes material bans; would accept a roofing-only rule if phased in over two building seasons.

Woodland Residents Association

Members include the Three Bears, Little Red Riding Hood's grandmother and the Big Bad Wolf. Divided on wolf penalties; united against anything that lets outsiders enter woodland homes.

Nursery Rhyme Village Taxpayers League

Opposes new taxes, including the egg tax; supports guardrails if paid for by wall owners.

Egg Producers Cooperative

Strongly opposes the egg tax; supports wall safety in principle.

Beanstalk Hollow Growers

Oppose seed permits; support liability for giants, not planters.

Riverbank Motorists Club

President: Mr. Toad. Opposes vehicle registration; supports "driver education."

Porridge Producers Cooperative

Supports temperature posting; horrified by the burglary defense.

SPONSOR INTERVIEW SHEET

Bill number and title: _____ Sponsor interviewed: _____

What problem does this bill solve? _____

What does Section 2 actually require? _____

Who pays, and how much? _____

What is the strongest argument against your bill, in your own words? _____

What would you be willing to change? _____

Exact quote I may use: " _____ "

LEAVE BEHIND TEMPLATE (ONE PAGE)

[Interest Group Name] represented by [student names]

Bill: [number and title] **Our position:** Support / Oppose / Support with amendment

.....
.....
The ask: Please vote [yes/no] on Bill _____ when it reaches the floor.

Three reasons

1. [Reason] Evidence: [story event]
2. [Reason] Evidence: [story event]
3. [Reason] Evidence: [story event]

What the other side says, and our response: [Fair one-sentence statement of the opposing view.] [Two-sentence answer.]

.....
.....
What the sponsor told us: "[exact quote]"

.....
.....
Contact: [names, district, how to reach the team]

ADVOCACY ETHICS RULES

1. Say who you represent before you say anything else.
2. Tell the truth. If you do not know, say so and find out.
3. Quote sponsors and legislators accurately or not at all.
4. State the other side fairly before you answer it.
5. Respect the legislator's time: arrive on time, leave on time.
6. Never offer anything of value for a vote, not even a cookie from the Gingerbread House.
7. Never pressure, threaten or embarrass a legislator.
8. The Gazette test: act as if everything you say will be printed.

VOTE TRACKER

Team: _____ Bill: _____

Legislator (district): _____ Response: Yes / No / Leaning _ / Undecided Notes: _____

(Repeat for each meeting.) Predicted floor vote: Pass / Fail by _____

ABOUT THIS SERIES

Storybook County Lesson Plans use public domain stories to practice real YMCA Youth and Government processes: bills, committees, debate, courts, elections, service, and proposals. Every lesson is three or four 30-minute sessions, and all of them live in one folder:

drive.google.com/drive/folders/1MieLDxVzKNq7QTwjw2EPFDqgMOaaJ2US. Part of the YMCA Youth and Government Educator Toolkit at nysyag.org. Questions: Drew Caldwell, dcaldwell@ymcanys.org.