

Bill Writing Guide

This section contains complete information about writing and preparing bills.

Bill Topic Requirements

All YAG bills must comply with the following rules regarding their content:

- **must not** be a substantially similar topic as a bill passed in the previous year of YAG
- **must not** be a copy or close reproduction of a previous YAG bill (passed or failed)
- **must not** be outside the jurisdiction of Connecticut State law
- **must not** conflict with the Connecticut Constitution
- **must not** conflict with the Constitution of the United States
- **must not** be substantially similar to an existing Connecticut law
- **must not** be a copy or close reproduction of an actual or pending General Assembly bill
- **may** be a new law
- **may** be a substantive amendment to an existing law
- **may** be a repeal of an existing law
- **may** be a repeal of an existing law to be replaced by a new law
- **may** be an amendment to the Connecticut Constitution

Inappropriate Topics

Sometimes delegates pursue bill topics that are ill-advised despite following all the rules above. Local advisors have the primary responsibility for guiding delegates towards more appropriate topics. The YMCA Character Counts program provides a helpful framework in these situations:

- **Caring:** Bills should reflect the author's understanding of the effects of the proposal. Who will benefit? Who will be harmed? What are the costs and who will bear them?
- **Respect:** Bill topics and language should show respect for the legislative process, for those affected by the bill, and of the legal issues and principles involved.
- **Honesty:** Bill authors should be honest in their advocacy of their bills. Rhetorical games, exaggerated or unsubstantiated claims, disingenuous criticisms should not be part of the bill or the debate associated with the bill.
- **Responsibility:** Bill authors are responsible for understanding the impact of their bill. They have a responsibility to present relevant bills that are worthy of debate in our Capitol and of the use of the limited time during the weekend.

More common than inappropriate topics is the issue of frivolous topics, which are problematic because of the limited time available. Many delegates put a lot of effort into their bills and in some cases have personal experience with the topics under discussion. Time spent debating a frivolous bill is time taken away from consideration of a more substantial issue. Once again, advisors are encouraged to use the character counts framework outlined above to help delegates make better choices of bill topics.

There is a place for silly or frivolous bills—they can be excellent source of material when practicing parliamentary procedure at the local delegation level or while teaching about the form and structure of a bill.

Select Committee

Returning delegates may choose to draft a bill that specifically addresses a pre-announced state issue. These bills will be gathered together and discussed in a special ‘select committee’. This process provides a mechanism to encourage research and debate in a particular state issue in more depth than can be accomplished via the standard committee process.

- to encourage in-depth research regarding an important issue in the State of Connecticut
- to stimulate informed debate based on prior research and preparation
- to provide the press and lobbyist programs a known-topic for investigation and research
- to identify particular YAG bills to be officially presented to the Connecticut General Assembly

Program Elements

Announced Topic: In September, the Program Committee will announce a topic/state issue to be addressed by the “Select Committee on State Issues” during the program year. All bills assigned to this committee will be focused on addressing this topic.

Optional Participation: Returning participants have a choice of preparing a bill according to the regular bill process or they may elect to prepare a bill addressing the topic assigned to the Select Committee. The select committee will consist of Nutmeg and Charter Oak participants. At least one bill from each delegation will be assigned to the committee. Additional bills will be assigned space permitting. Bills that are not accepted will be assigned to a regular committee.

Pre-State Committee: During Pre-State, the committee will conduct a public hearing in addition to discussion of the pending bills. The committee will extend invitations to government officials, affected parties, and program participants to solicit input regarding the legislation to be considered by the committee.

State Conference: The select committee will meet during the regular committee time on Friday. The highly ranked bills from this committee will be put on their respective Nutmeg or Charter Oak dockets, always starting in the Senate and the committee shall select the Representatives and Senators to present the bills in the House and Senate (i.e. the bill authors may not be the primary presenters).

Post-State Conference: Any bills from the select committee that are passed by the legislature and signed by the Governor will be presented to the Connecticut General Assembly for consideration during their legislative session.

Bill Format

All bills must be submitted via the registration website (register.ctyag.org). The website has a 'bill preview' feature that formats a bill for printing.

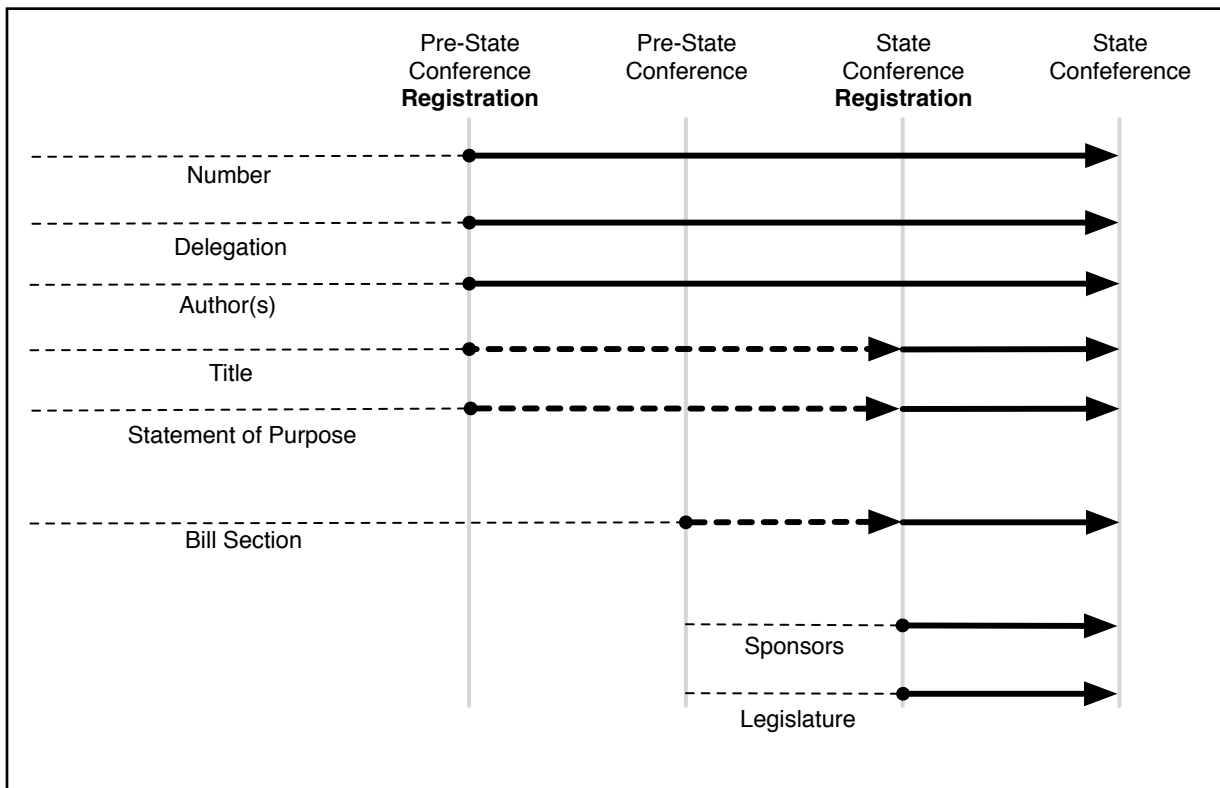


The bill forms have been updated to more closely correspond to the bill format used by the actual Connecticut General Assembly. These changes include:

- for bills **creating laws**: a Connecticut General Statute is no longer required
- for bills **amending laws**: the statute is identified in the body of the bill
- for bills **repealing laws**: the statute is identified in the body of the bill
- the format of the Statement of Purpose has been updated
- the layout of a bill is closer to the actual General Assembly bills



The following illustration shows the relationship between the bill elements and the program deadlines. A detailed discussion of the elements follows below.



Bill Development Timeline

- **light dashed lines** indicate items that have not been submitted yet
- **heavy dashed lines** indicate items that have been submitted but that may still change
- **solid dark lines** indicate items that have been submitted and must not change.

For example, the bill number must be provided at the Pre-State Registration deadline and is final at that point while the bill title, provided at the same deadline, may be modified until the State Conference Registration deadline. The timeline shows that sponsors and the legislature designation (see Bill Numbers below) are added between Pre-State and the submission of the final bill.

Bill Element Summary

Most of the elements of a bill are discussed in detail in the following pages. The following chart provides a simple summary.

Element	Description
Number	a four digit number identifying the bill and delegation
Legislature	a C or N after the Number identifying the legislature (Charter Oak or Nutmeg)
Delegation	the author's delegation name
Author(s)	the full name(s) of the author or co-authors
Sponsors	the full names of the sponsors (not necessarily the same as the authors, see the detailed description for information)
Title	an all capitals phrase such as 'AN ACT CONCERNING...' or 'AN ACT AUTHORIZING...'; always starts with 'AN ACT'
Text	the main text of the bill broken into sections with sections broken into paragraphs (see detailed guidelines in this section)
Statement of Purpose	a brief statement describing the results to be expected from enactment of the bill; always starts with 'To ...'
Advisor's Signature	all bills must be reviewed and approved by the lead advisor for the delegation

Bill Numbers and Authors

Bills are identified by a number and a letter, such as 1301C or 1511N. The first two digits indicate the delegation, the next two indicate a particular bill within the delegation and the letter indicates the Legislature: C for Charter Oak and N for Nutmeg.

- The delegation codes are listed in the Quick Reference guide of this manual.
- Advisors assign the next two digits usually starting with 00, 01, 02 and so on.

Once the four digit bill code has been assigned, it should not change. If some delegates drop out of the program it is not necessary to renumber the bills.

The legislature code should be appended to the four digit bill code when the *final bill* is prepared and submitted. Delegations are not assigned to the Charter Oak and Nutmeg legislatures until the Pre-State Conference. Larger delegations may be asked to split their delegates between both legislatures.

There are several issues to consider when assigning the legislature code:

- the bill, its authors, and its sponsors must all be assigned to the **same** legislature
- if a delegate (usually a Senator) is sponsoring more than one bill, all bills and the sponsor must be assigned to the same legislature
- some appointed positions (e.g. Committee Chairs, the Deputy Speakers and the President Pro Tempores) serve in a particular legislature, their bills must be assigned to the same legislature in which they are serving

Bill Authors

All delegates, other than Press Corp members and lobbyists, are required to author a bill for the State Conference. Each delegate may author their own bill or work with one other delegate to co-author a bill. No more than two delegates may co-author a bill.



The following rules ensure that committees can be efficiently organized while allowing multiple authors to represent their bills:

- A delegate may not be listed as an author on more than two bills.
- A delegate may not be listed as a co-author on more than one bill unless both bills are co-authored by the same pair of delegates.

Speaking and Voting Rules

Since some bill authors are not legislators (clerks, officers, press, and so on) there are some restrictions on how they participate at the State Conference:

Position	Committee			House/Senate		
	public comment	debate	vote	public comment	debate	vote
Governor	no	no	no	no	no	no
Governor's Advisors	yes	no	no	yes	no	no
Secretary of the State	yes	no	no	yes	no	no
Deputy Secretary of the State	yes	no	no	yes	no	no
Attorney General	yes	no	no	yes	no	no
Deputy Attorney General	yes	no	no	yes	no	no
Clerks	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	no

- The Governor's Advisors, the Attorney General, and the Deputy Attorney Generals must recuse themselves from any discussions with the Governor regarding their own bill.

Bill Sponsors

Bill authors are responsible for presenting their bills during committee hearings but during debate on the House or Senate floor it is the bill **Sponsors** who have that responsibility.

- Each bill must have one Senate and one House Sponsor.

One Author: the author will be either the House or Senate Sponsor and the author will have to solicit another delegate to sponsor their bill in the other house.

One Senate Author and One House Author: both are listed as Sponsors in the Senate and House respectively.

Two Senate Authors or Two House Authors: one author is listed as Senate or House Sponsor and the authors must solicit another delegate (just one) to sponsor their bill in the other house.

- Delegates from the author's delegation are usually listed as sponsors but that is not required; authors may solicit a sponsor from another delegation.
- Authors are responsible for getting permission to list another delegate as a sponsor of their bill.
- Delegates must be prepared to present and argue in favor of any bills on which they are listed as a Sponsor. This requires a certain amount of preparation.
- Authors are responsible for educating and preparing delegates who agree to sponsor their bill.

Senators

Because there is a 6 to 1 ratio between Representatives and Senators, Senators tend to have the additional responsibility of sponsoring a large number of bills. For example, with a delegation of seven members, the one Senator will be listed as the Sponsor on all seven bills (assuming no co-authors).



Since most delegations do not select Senators until after the Pre-State Conference, Sponsors do not have to be included on bills at Pre-State. They must be included on the final bills.

Bill Title and Statement of Purpose

The bill title appears at the top of the bill, is written in capital letters and usually starts with “AN ACT CONCERNING”. The text should be a brief phrase that clearly and concisely summarizes the subject matter of the bill and its primary action. The title always starts with ‘AN ACT...’

The Statement of Purpose, which always appear at the end of a bill, is a brief sentence or two that clearly and concisely summarizes **why** this bill is being introduced or **what** problem the bill addresses. The Purpose always starts with ‘To...’

Here are some examples from the actual Connecticut General Assembly:

Title: ***AN ACT CONCERNING THE ALTERNATIVE ROUTE TO CERTIFICATION PROGRAM FOR TEACHERS.***

Statement of Purpose: To expand the alternative teacher certification program so that it accommodates more teachers.

Title: ***AN ACT CONCERNING ELECTRONIC MAIL MESSAGE PHISHING.***

Statement of Purpose: To prevent electronic mail message phishing.

Title: ***AN ACT REINSTATING THE SUMMER YOUTH EMPLOYMENT APPROPRIATION***

Statement of Purpose: To provide meaningful year-round employment for at-risk youth in the state, with emphasis on summertime employment.

Title: ***AN ACT CONCERNING ELIGIBILITY FOR THE APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING TAX CREDIT.***

Statement of Purpose: To expand eligibility for apprenticeship training tax credit.

Title: ***AN ACT PROPOSING AN AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION TO ELIMINATE COUNTRY SHERIFFS***

Statement of Purpose: To eliminate sheriffs as constitutional officers.

The most important aspect of a Title and a Statement of Purpose is that they provide a helpful summary of the content of the bill.

Bill Sections

There is no need or requirement for bills to be written in confusing legalese with ‘heretofore’ and ‘whereas’ sprinkled throughout the text. Bills should be written in concise, clean language and written in the present tense.

This section outlines the overall formatting rules for bills, discusses how a bill should be divided into sections, and provides examples for various types of sections.

Line Spacing and Numbering

- Lines should be numbered and widely spaced.
- There should be extra space between paragraphs.
- The Statement of Purpose should be single spaced, not numbered, and should be aligned with the text on the left (not the line numbers).

Example: This is a simple example showing two sections and a statement of purpose

1. Section 1. This is the first section of the bill. See how the lines are numbered on the left
2. and double spaced?
3. Section 2. This is the second section of the bill. See how there is extra space between the
4. two sections?

Statement of Purpose: To illustrate the basic formatting rules for a bill. This text shouldn't be squeezed over on the right as in previous years and it should be single spaced, unlike the main text.

Bill Organization: Sections and Paragraphs

The main text of a bill should be formatted according to the following rules:

- Every bill consists of one or more numbered sections. (Section 1, Section 2, ...)
- Each section consists of one or more paragraphs.
- Each section (not paragraph) represents a distinct change to the General Statute:
 - a section may **create** a new statute
 - a section may **repeal** an existing statute
 - a section may **amend** an existing statute
 - a section may **replace** an existing statute with a new one
 - a section may **define** terms used in other sections
- A bill may propose more than one change, each in its own section, but all the changes must be clearly related to each other.
- Unless specified otherwise, the effective date of all legislation is October 1 in the year the legislation is passed.
- A bill may specify the effective date of the legislation. This notice appears after the bill sections and before the Statement of Purpose (see examples below).

Bill Section Examples

Example: a section of two paragraphs enacting a new statute

1. Section 1. (a) No person shall distribute, transport or import into the state, keep for sale,
2. or offer or expose for sale, or give away any electronic defense weapon, as defined in section
3. 53a-3 of the general statutes.

4. (b) Any person who violates subsection (a) of this section shall be fined not more than five
5. hundred dollars or imprisoned not more than three years, or both.

Example: a bill that repeals an existing statute

AN ACT CONCERNING TESTING START TIMES

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1. Section 1. Section 10-14s of the general statutes is repealed

Statement of Purpose: To repeal a statute concerning examination start times.

- the statute to be repealed is identified in the first section
- the title and statement of purpose should make it clear what topic the repealed statute was concerning.

Example: a section amending an existing statute

1. Section 1. Section 38a-330 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in
2. lieu thereof:

3. Each property and casualty insurer which at the time of policy renewal, transfers any policy to
4. an affiliate as a result of a merger or acquisition of control, shall provide notice to policyholders
5. at least sixty days prior to the effective date of transfer. Such transfer shall not require a
6. non-renewal or cancellation of the policy.

- lines 1 and 2 illustrate the way to introduce the change, the appropriate section of the general statutes should be referenced
- lines 3 through 6 is the replacement text for the statute
- any new text that did not appear in the previous statute must be indicated by underlining the new material as in line 6

Bill Section Examples

Example: a section amending an existing statute by adding a subdivision

1. Section 46a-11 of the general statutes is amended by adding subdivision (14) as follows:
2. (14) Establish an Accessibility Advisory Board with membership comprised of design...

- in this example, a list of 13 items in the general statutes is extended with additional item 14
- If the author had wanted to insert this new text in the middle of the existing list, the section would have to show the entire statute with the new item inserted and underlined and the remaining items renumbered. See the next example for details.

Example: a section amending an existing statute with additions and deletions:

1. Section 1. Subsection (a) of section 7-73 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is
2. substituted in lieu thereof (Effective October 1, 2006):
3. (a) To any person performing the duties required by the provisions of the general statutes
4. relating to registration of [births,] marriages, deaths and fetal deaths, the following fees shall be
5. allowed: (1) [To the registrar for completing each record of birth by procuring and inserting the
6. full name of the child, or for the recording, indexing, copying and endorsing of each birth,
7. marriage, death or fetal death certificate, two dollars; (2) for] For the license to marry, ten
8. dollars; and [(3)] (2) for issuing each burial or burial transit removal permit, three dollars.

- as in the previous example, additions are underlined (line 7 and 8)
- deletions appear between brackets [like this] (lines 4, 5, and 8)
- in this example the previous text had a list of three items, the change removed the first item from the list so the subsequent items had to be renumbered, tedious but necessary

Bill Section Examples

Example: a section defining terms to be used in the bill

1. Section 1. As used in sections 2 to 5, inclusive, of this act:
2. (1) "Microenterprise" means any business, new or existing, with ten or fewer employees and
3. annual gross revenues of less than five hundred thousand dollars, including home-based and
4. owner-operated businesses.
5. (2) "Program" means the microloan program for microenterprises established in section 2
6. of this act.

- line 1 indicates the definitions provided are with respect to this bill only
- it is common to reference definitions that appear elsewhere in the statutes
- lines 2-4 define "microenterprise" as used in this bill
- lines 5-6 define "Program" as used in this bill
- each definition is its own paragraph and is numbered

Example: a section with special effective date

1. Section 1. (a) No person shall distribute, transport or import into the state, keep for sale,
2. or offer or expose for sale, or give away any electronic defense weapon, as defined in section
3. 53a-3 of the general statutes.
4. (b) Any person who violates subsection (a) of this section shall be fined not more than five
5. hundred dollars or imprisoned not more than three years, or both.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>upon passage</i>	34-15b

Statement of Purpose: To prevent the distribution and sale of electronic defense weapons.

- In this example, the effective date of Section 1 is made to be upon passage instead of the traditionally assumed October 1st implementation of new laws.
- for bills with with more than one section, each section should be listed in the table with its effective date and any statute that it is amending or replacing.

The practice in Connecticut is for effective date of bills (or sections) to be as follows:

Type of Bill or Section	Effective Date
most bills including bills changing criminal law	October 1st
most budget and funding bills	July 1st
emergency legislation or legislation requiring immediate response	upon passage

Bill Section Example: Constitution Amendment

Example: a bill that proposes a Constitutional Amendment

1. Section 1. Section 25 of article fourth of the Constitution is repealed.

- line 1 indicates the section of the resolution. As with regular bills, a bill that amends the constitution should have one section for each change it is proposing to the constitution.
- Use underlined text to indicate additions and bracketed text to indicate deletions to the original text.
- Constitutional amendments must pass the House and Senate with a 2/3rds majority vote
- Use the Constitutional Amendment version of the bill form, not the standard bill form.