

**Canada-United States
A Legislative Comparison**

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Description:

This exercise introduces students to:

- The process of law making in different forms of democracy.
- The organization of the legislative branch in Canada and the US.
- The role of the chief executive in the law making process of each country.
- The strengths and weaknesses of each of these democratic systems.

Grade Level(s):

Suitable for grades 11-12

Duration:

Two/three 45 minute class periods

Subjects:

American History/US Government

Goal:

The goal is to recognize differing forms of democracy

Objectives:

The students will:

- Compare the process of law making in the presidential and parliamentary forms of government.
- Compare the advantages and disadvantages of the two party and multi party systems.

Standards:

This lesson meets WA state Social Studies standard 2.1 and 2.3

Background Information:

Before this activity, students will have examined the law making process of the US Congress and the presidential and parliamentary forms of government by reading the appropriate sections of Chapter 12 *Congress in Action* and Chapter 22 *Comparative Political Systems* in their student textbooks. (Magruder's *American Government*)

Materials:

Students will be provided with pp. 41-45 of *Canada: Northern Neighbor (Second Edition)* as well as three handouts from the Canadian House of Commons website: (1) Bills, The 37th Parliament, 3rd Session. (2) House of Commons fact sheet, The Legislative Process. (3) Chapter 11 of the *Precis Procedure*.

Procedure:

After the students have read the textbook and supplementary material, the class will be divided into three groups, each with a specific assignment. *Group one* – Will develop a detailed flow chart of a bill becoming law in the US Congress. *Group two* – Will develop a detailed flow chart of a bill becoming law in the Canadian Parliament. *Group three* – Will compare and contrast the two law making processes by examining information such as: the introduction of bills, the HOR and HOC, the Senate of each legislature, limits on debate, the use of committees, the role of the executive in the law making process.

Each group will select a spokesperson to present their findings to the rest of the class following the completion of their work. Following the presentations the teacher will lead the class in a brain storming discussion on two questions. (1) Compare and contrast the two party and multi-party systems on the law making process. (2) Which of these two systems provides for greater democratic expression.

Assessment:

Students will complete a peer assessment regarding the participation of other members of their group. Students will be quizzed on the group presentations. Students will also be expected to write an opinion essay on the two questions posed in the brain storming session, the student will defend their opinion with logic and examples discussed in the brain storming session.