



## TAKE ACTION: LOBBY A LEGISLATOR

### Distance Learning Lesson Plan

#### Lesson Overview

We are in an unprecedented moment in our history. Beyond impacting their everyday lives and experiences, this pandemic will shape young people's faith in government and how responsive it is to community needs. **That's why, in the midst of all of this, we want students to hear loud and clear: in a crisis, our democracy doesn't pause.** At this moment, our young people have thoughts, feelings, and reactions - and we know civics can provide students with an authentic space and guidance to express those responses and use their voices.

In “Lobby a Legislator” middle and high school students are able to take concrete action and engage in our democracy in a meaningful way. They will begin by sharing how the government’s decisions in response to this pandemic has impacted their daily lives. **Prior to engaging in this lesson, we strongly encourage you to review the Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s guide for [Talking to Students About Coronavirus](https://bit.ly/2wEUrS1) (<https://bit.ly/2wEUrS1>).** Students will research the legislative action their state or neighboring states have taken and share whether they agree with the bill or not. Once they’ve identified a piece of legislation they support or oppose, or in the case of states who have not proposed bills, legislation they would like their state to consider, they will lobby their state legislator. At the end of the lesson, because lawmakers are busy focusing on COVID-19 response, students will also share their letter via social media tagging the lawmaker.

**Note for Texas teachers:** As you know the Texas legislature only meets every other year (on odd numbered years) for 140 days. In order for the state legislature to respond, the Texas Governor would have to call the legislature back for a special session. He has not indicated that he plans to do this. Once students review the bills proposed in neighboring states, they could determine if they think the Governor should call the legislature back to respond to this crisis. Students can also do some online searches to check if their local municipality has proposed any ordinances in light of COVID-19 and advocate to their city councilors and/or mayor on behalf of those. If students feel their municipality could be doing more, they could do research on what other cities are doing and then advocate to their city councilors and/or mayor to pass a similar ordinance. Finally, governors can and often do put policies in place without the passage of legislation, particularly in times of crisis, so students in TX could still advocate directly to their governor about a policy they think should be put in place during this time.

# Lobby a Legislator Lesson Plan

## Materials and Preparation:

- **Talking to Students About Coronavirus** (<https://bit.ly/2wEUrS1>) - Review the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's guide.
- **Take Action: Research** (PDF attached, [link to editable Google Doc](#)) - Edit the reading to support your students' learning needs.
- **National Conference of State Legislators: State Action on COVID-19** (<https://bit.ly/2UIHh5p>)
- **Take Action: Track Legislation** (PDF attached, [link to editable Google Doc](#)) -
  - If using Google Classroom, consider creating an assignment or if using Google Drive consider making a copy for each student.
- **Take Action: Email a Legislator Template** (PDF attached)
- **Optional:** Consider providing a review of the branches of government by implementing the Guide to Government lesson (PDF attached, [link to Google Doc](#))

## Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Analyze state legislation.
- Assess whether the legislation benefits their community.
- Lobby for or against the legislation by emailing their state legislator.

## Today's Agenda

- Do Now: The Impact
- Mini-Lesson: State Action
- Worktime: Tactic: Lobby a Legislator
- Wrap-up: Tactic: Post on Social Media

<p><b>Take a look at this sidebar for instructional tips!</b></p> <p><b>TIP:</b> These questions may bring up many emotions, thoughts, feelings, and reactions. Prior to engaging your students in this activity, consider reaching out to your school social worker and providing students with information on how to contact them.</p> <p><b>TIP:</b> If using virtual facetime (ex. Zoom or Google Hangouts), ask students to speak their answers or share their responses using the “chat” feature.</p>	<p><b>DO NOW 10 MINS</b></p> <p><b>The Impact</b></p> <p><b>Frame:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This pandemic has already impacted so much of our daily lives. Decisions are being made by our leaders rapidly and it’s often difficult to keep up with it.</li> </ul> <p><b>Discuss:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are some of the decisions that have been made by the president, governor, mayor and other leaders in response to this pandemic?</li> <li>• How have these decisions impacted your daily life?</li> </ul> <p><b>Debrief:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledge that this is a challenging time for all and that although we do not know when things will get better, we do know they will get better.</li> <li>• Remember that, “In moments like these our democracy doesn’t pause, but rather, becomes more significant than ever.” (Scott Warren)</li> <li>• That’s why, in the midst of all of this, we need to hear the voices of young people loud and clear: in a crisis, our democracy doesn’t pause.</li> <li>• Today you will have the chance to analyze state legislation, identify a bill you support or oppose, and contact your state legislator to share your support or opposition.</li> </ul>
<p><b>TIP:</b> Consider sharing the modified reading to support the needs of your middle schoolers and Multilingual Learners.</p>	<p><b>MINI-LESSON 15 MINS</b></p> <p><b>State Action</b></p> <p><b>Frame:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As you’ve already shared, the federal, state and local government has made decisions to ensure we are able to minimize the impact of this pandemic. Many state lawmakers have also responded by submitting bills to protect the residents of their states. The National Council of State Legislators</li> </ul>

**TIP:** Document student responses by creating a Google Doc or add the prompt to your Google Classroom and have them enter their responses there.

**TIP:** If you're leading a virtual class (Zoom, Google Hangouts, etc) consider the following:

- Ask students to read the document silently and mark the text with questions about terms or concepts.
- Ask students to share their questions and work through the answers as a class.
- Set a visual timer ([YouTube](#) has some neat ones!) and ask students to answer the questions independently.
- Ask students to share their responses.
- If using Zoom, consider creating "Breakout Rooms" ([Tutorial on Managing Breakout Rooms](#)) where students can collaborate in small groups to read to these prompts.

created a map to help track the status of the legislation. They also provide a bill summary for each state's legislation.

**Task:**

- Begin your research by reading the State Action Overview and answer the guiding questions.
  - Question: What level and branch of government does the Trump administration lead?
    - Answer: The federal level and the executive branch
  - Question: Why do you think it is important for state health officials to work with the CDC and federal authorities (the Trump administration)?
    - Possible answers include: Ensure states receive funding, ensure accurate and timely information is shared
  - Question: Why are the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico listed separately from the twenty-nine states that have enacted or adopted legislation?
    - Answer: DC and PR are not states, they are U.S. territories. As such they have access to federal government support, especially in time of a crisis.

**TIP:** Consider asking students: What does it mean to have a living document? What does “pending” mean?

**TIP:** Before sharing what the COVID-19 Related Legislation map represents, ask students to read the map and share what each color means.

**TIP:** If your virtual class is using Zoom, consider creating “Breakout Rooms” ([Tutorial on Managing Breakout Rooms](#)) where students can collaborate in small groups to respond to these prompts. Have them select a student for each of the following roles: 1) a facilitator to ensure all questions are asked and all voices are heard 2) a notetaker to document responses on a Google

## WORK TIME 40 MINS

### Track Legislation

#### Frame:

- On the National Conference of State Legislators website you’ll find the full version of the reading you completed. Above the overview is a map of the states that have proposed bills in response to the pandemic. It’s important to note that just like the U.S. Constitution and our own Class Constitution, this website is a living document.
- As a living document this website is updated daily. The COVID-19 Related Legislation map above the overview is a visual representation of the states that have pending, adopted, or no legislation in response to the pandemic.
- Below the overview is a list of the states, their corresponding proposed legislation, and the status of each. Now you will use this tool to research whether your state has proposed a bill and if so, to review the summary of the bill.

#### Task:

- Follow the directions to complete Part 1: steps 1- 4 on the Take Action: Track Legislation.
- Enter your state’s name to see if your state has proposed new legislation in response to COVID-19.
  - If your state has not proposed new legislation either look to see if a neighboring state has and use their legislation OR share what type of legislation your state would benefit from.
    - Read through the bills and identify at least 2 that you find useful or important.
    - Enter the State abbreviation, copy the Bill Summary, and enter the status.
    - Answer the questions in the last 2 columns.

#### Debrief:

- Now that you’ve reviewed the legislation and completed your legislation tracker, please share the legislation that you would like to support or oppose and why.

<p>Doc 3) a timekeeper and 4) a spokesperson to share some of the group's responses upon returning to the main group.</p> <p><b>TIP:</b> Consider having students work in pairs to lobby a legislator.</p>	<p><b>Lobby a Legislator</b></p> <p><b>Frame:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Hearing from constituents, or the people for whom they are responsible, helps decision-makers take a position on an issue and prioritize which issues they will spend their time and energy on. An effective way for you to make your voice heard is to directly <b>send emails</b> to decision-makers.</li> </ul> <p><b>Task:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Return to your legislation tracker and complete Part 2: steps 5 - 7. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Click on the bill number for the bill you're interested in supporting or opposing. This will take you to the actual bill text. At the top you will find the names of all of the state lawmakers involved in creating this bill.</li> <li>○ Add lawmakers names and email addresses below your bill.</li> <li>○ To locate their email address either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Conduct a quick Google search: State + Name + Email (Alabama Figures email); OR</li> <li>■ Visit State Legislatures Websites to find your state's website. Search for their email address.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>● Now that you have their email address use the Take Action: Email a Legislator as a template to draft your email. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Use the reasons for supporting or opposing the bill that you developed in the last column of the Track Legislation graphic organizer.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>TIP:</b> Many students do not have social media accounts for a variety of reasons. Consider polling your class using <a href="#">Google Form</a> or <a href="#">Strawpoll</a> prior to engaging in this lesson</p>	<p><b>WRAP-UP 10 MINS</b></p> <p><b>Tactic: Post on Social Media</b></p> <p><b>Frame:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Since lawmakers are motivated by meeting the expectations of their constituents, the more constituents they hear from the better! You can share your letter via social media and/or via text to your network to try to mobilize other people to support the legislation, as well, and to contact their representative, too.</li> </ul>

- You can inspire others. Tell everyone—your friends and family, neighbors and co-workers—that you are lobbying a legislator.

**Task:**

- Post a screenshot or photo of your letter on social media.
- Don't forget to add #democracydoesntpause and tag @generationcitizen on Instagram or @gencitizen on Twitter
- Consider including a call to action for your followers to retweet, repost, or send their own message.
- Tag your legislator - they may respond!



## Overview of State Legislative Action

Excerpt from NCSL State Action on Coronavirus (COVID-19)  
Accessed on March 26, 2020  
<https://bit.ly/2UIHh5p>

The Trump administration declared a public health emergency in January and several federal agencies have been involved in the U.S. response to the outbreak.

### State Action

As the federal government leads the national response to the COVID-19, state and local health departments stand on the front lines. State or public health emergency declarations have been issued in each state and territory, including the District of Columbia.

State health officials continue to work with the CDC, federal authorities and other health agencies to ensure a collaborative response. Meanwhile, several states are taking legislative action to mitigate the effects of an outbreak.

At least thirty-two states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico have introduced legislation to support state action related to COVID-19, including resolutions to encourage certain practices and bills that involve funding, workforce protections or medical coverage, disease surveillance, isolation and quarantine or are related to actions taken by the Governor in a state of emergency. Of these, twenty-nine states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico have enacted or adopted legislation.

*\*CDC - Center for Disease Control and Prevention is the leading national public health institute of the United States. It is a United States federal agency, under the Department of Health and Human Services, and is headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia.*

### Guiding Questions:

1. What level and branch of government does the Trump administration lead?
2. Why do you think it is important for state health officials to work with the CDC and federal authorities (the Trump administration)?
3. Why are the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico listed separately from the twenty-nine states that have enacted or adopted legislation?





## Overview of State Legislative Action

Revised Version using [rewordify.com](https://www.rewordify.com)

Excerpt from NCSL State Action on Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Accessed on March 26, 2020

<https://bit.ly/2UIHh5p>

The Trump government declared a public health emergency in January and (more than two, but not a lot of) federal (services businesses/government units) have been involved in the U.S. response to the outbreak.

### State Action

As the federal government leads the national response to the COVID-19, state and local health departments stand on the front lines. State or public health emergency (official, public statements/documents with such statements) have been issued in each state and (land area owned or controlled by someone), including the District of Columbia.

State health (people in charge of something) continue to work with the CDC, federal people in charge and other health (services businesses/government units) to secure/make sure of a group/(working well together) response. Meanwhile, (more than two, but not a lot of) states are taking law-based action to lessen (something bad) the effects of an outbreak.

At least thirty-two states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico have introduced laws (and law making) to support state action related to COVID-19, including (formal statements about something) to encourage certain practices and bills that involve money/giving money (to), (all the workers in a company or country) protections or medical coverage, disease (secretly recording/watching people), (being completely separate from others) and isolation (to protect from spreading disease) or are related to actions taken by the Governor in a state of emergency. Of these, twenty-nine states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico have put into law or put into use laws (and law making).

\*CDC - Center for Disease Control and Prevention is the leading national public health institute of the United States. It is a United States federal (service business/government unit/power/functioning), under the Department of Health and Human Services, and is located and managed in Atlanta, Georgia.

### Guiding Questions:

4. What level and branch of government does the Trump administration lead?
5. Why do you think it is important for state health officials to work with the CDC and federal authorities (the Trump administration)?
6. Why are the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico listed separately from the twenty-nine states that have enacted or adopted legislation?



## TAKE ACTION: TRACK LEGISLATION

### Part 1: Instructions

1. Visit National Conference of State Legislators: State Action on COVID-19  
<https://bit.ly/2UIHh5p>
2. Enter your state's name to see if your state has proposed new legislation in response to COVID-19. Read through the bills and identify at least 2.
3. Enter the State abbreviation, copy the Bill Summary, and enter the status.
4. Answer the questions in the last 2 columns.

### Part 2: Instructions

5. Click on the bill number for the bill you're interested in supporting or opposing. This will take you to the actual bill text. At the top you will find the names of all of the state lawmakers involved in creating this bill.
6. Add lawmakers names and email addresses below your bill.
7. To locate their email address either conduct a quick Google search: State + Name + Email (AL Figures email) OR Visit State Legislatures Websites to find your states website. Search for their email.

### Frequently Asked Questions

What if my state hasn't proposed a bill?

*If your state has not proposed new legislation either look to see if a neighboring state has and use their legislation OR share what type of legislation your state would benefit from the Governor's response to the crisis.*

Texas legislature is currently not in session. What should I do?

*As a Texas student you can examine legislation in neighboring states, or share recommendations for the state legislature's next session (Spring 2021). You can also examine local responses at your city or county level.*

### EXAMPLE

State	Bill Summary & Status	What does this bill do?	Do you agree with this bill? Why or why not?
AL	<a href="#">SJR 40</a> Urges individuals to fist bump rather than shake hands.	It bans people in Alabama from shaking hands and spreading germs.	I do not agree this will stop the spread of the virus since people would still be touching each other. Also, if you're close enough to fist bump you're probably not standing 3-6 feet away from each other.
State Legislators Sponsoring Bill		Add Email Address	
Senator Figures		<a href="mailto:vivian.figures@alsenate.gov">vivian.figures@alsenate.gov</a>	
Senator Albritton		<a href="mailto:galbritton@att.net">galbritton@att.net</a>	



## TAKE ACTION: TRACK LEGISLATION

State	Bill Summary <i>(Include the bill link)</i>	What does this bill do?	Do you agree with this bill? Why or why not?
State Legislators sponsoring bill		Add Email Address for each	



## TAKE ACTION: TRACK LEGISLATION

State	Bill Summary <i>(Include the bill link)</i>	What does this bill do?	Do you agree with this bill? Why or why not?
State Legislators sponsoring bill		Add Email Address for each	



## TAKE ACTION: TRACK LEGISLATION

State	Bill Summary <i>(Include the bill link)</i>	What does this bill do?	Do you agree with this bill? Why or why not?
State Legislators sponsoring bill		Add Email Address for each	



## TAKE ACTION: EMAIL A LEGISLATOR

### How to Draft the Email

As you develop your email script remember that an effective and professional script will include:

- ❑ **Greeting:** Address your decision-maker with “Dear Senator (Last Name),”
- ❑ **Issue:** Include the bill number (you added it to the Track Legislation) and your interpretation of it.
  - If you’re proposing a bill, include the bill from the state you believe your state should consider.
- ❑ **Position:** Take a stand and make your “ask” – what you want your decision-maker to do and how they can do that.
- ❑ **Points:** Provide key points to support your position. Use your personal experience, your community’s realities, research and evidence.
- ❑ **Conclusion:** Restate your position and thank the decision maker for his/her time.
  - Request a response. It lets your decision-maker know that you are serious about your request and require an answer.

## Sample Email Script

<p><b>Subject</b> Include a strong and clear subject</p>	<p>Background Checks for Private Gun Dealers</p>
<p><b>Greeting</b> Use their title and last name.</p>	<p>Dear Senator Burks,</p>
<p><b>Issue</b> Make the email personal by sharing your connection to the issue.</p>	<p>I am a constituent and a student at J.J. Williams High School in Lexington, Illinois. Though only 15 years old, I've already seen two friends die from senseless gun violence, and my classmates and I want more protection from our government. We need to take a harder look at our gun laws to effectively protect our citizens.</p>
<p><b>Position: Your "Ask"</b> A clear "Ask" is presented.</p>	<p>I am writing to urge you to support background checks for guns purchased at a private dealer.</p>
<p>Provide key points to support your position. Use your personal experience, your communities realities, research and evidence.</p>	<p>The 1993 Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act requires background checks for all guns purchased from federal gun dealers and Illinois law also requires background checks for all firearm sales at gun shows. While these background checks are an important tool in helping protect the public, loopholes in the law allow criminals to access guns from private dealers.</p> <p>By not requiring background checks for the private sale of guns, we allow criminals and other prohibited purchasers to access guns with no questions asked.</p> <p>A statewide poll found that 80 percent of Illinois voters are in favor of background checks for private gun sales, including a majority support of Republicans, gun owners, and even NRA members.</p>
<p><b>Conclusion</b> Repeat the "Ask".</p>	<p>I hope that you understand the seriousness of this issue in communities like mine, and support background checks for private dealers. Please support common sense gun policies.</p> <p>Sincerely, Maria Rivera 123 Main Road, Chicago, IL (555) 555-5555</p>



## Take Action: Email a State or Local Leader

We are in an unprecedented moment in our history. Beyond impacting their everyday lives and experiences, this pandemic will shape young people's faith in government and how responsive it is to community needs. **That's why, in the midst of all of this, we want students to hear loud and clear: in a crisis, our democracy doesn't pause.** At this moment, our young people have thoughts, feelings, and reactions - and we know civics can provide students with an authentic space and guidance to express those responses and use their voices.

**TIP:** This discussion may bring up many emotions, thoughts, feelings, and reactions. Prior to engaging your child in this activity, consider reaching out to your school social worker and reviewing **Talking to Students About Coronavirus** (<https://bit.ly/2wEUs1>).

### Steps

1. **LISTEN** to at least three state and/or local briefings by your Governor and/or Mayor.
2. **DISCUSS** the information you hear and how it impacts you and your family.
  - o What information was most important for you, your family, and your community?
  - o What is most concerning to you and your family right now? Was this information addressed? If so, do you feel it was a sufficient/appropriate response?
3. **WRITE** an email or letter to your official. Use the attached template as a guide to draft an email or letter to the Governor and/or Mayor.
4. **SEND** your email or letter to the Governor and/or Mayor. Use your state or local government website to find the best email address or mailing address.
  - o Since elected officials receive frequent emails, many have a "Contact Us" feature on their website where residents can share their concerns or requests. For example, the Rhode Island Governor's website has a "Contact Us" page where you can either "copy and paste" your email or attach the letter as a PDF.
5. **POST** a screenshot or photo of your letter on social media.
  - o Don't forget to add #democracydoesntpause and tag @generationcitizen on Instagram or @gencitizen on Twitter.
  - o Consider including a call to action for your followers to retweet, repost, or send their own message.
  - o **Tag the Governor and/or Mayor - they may respond!**