

# Rhode Island Model Legislature

# **Handbook**

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Rhode Island Council for the Social Studies | [rimodellegislature.com](http://rimodellegislature.com)

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# Table of Contents

<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
What Is Model Legislature?	3
<b>Positions</b>	<b>4</b>
Delegations	4
Advisor	4
Students	4
Senator and Representatives	4
Clerks	5
Lobbyists	5
Alternates	5
Choosing Student Positions at the Delegation Level	5
Leadership Committee	5
Leadership Selection Committee	5
Committee Chairs	5
Party Leaders	6
Conservative and Liberal Party Leaders	7
Conservative and Liberal Whips	7
Conservative and Liberal Clerks	7
Chamber Administrators	7
Chamber Leaders	8
Chief Clerks	8
Parliamentarians	8
Attendance Policy	8
Checklists	8
<b>Parties</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Decorum</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Authoring Legislation</b>	<b>10</b>
Questions to Ask Yourself	10
Academic Integrity & Plagiarism	10
Abbreviated Bill Format	11
Formatting Rules	11
Example: Formatting	11

Example: Sample	13
Instructions by Section	13
<b>Code of Rules and Regulations</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Robert's Rules of Order: At a Glance</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Digital Platform: A Redesigned Experience</b>	<b>22</b>
What is the Digital Platform?	22
What Changes does the Digital Platform Bring?	22
The Website	22
Google's G-Suite for Nonprofits	22
The Repository	23
YouTube Channel	23
Secure Voting Systems	23
Additional Roles and Expectations: State Coordinators	24
Additional Roles and Expectations: Administrators	24
Additional Roles and Expectations: Advisors	25
Additional Roles and Expectations: Students	25
<b>Glossary</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Addendum A: How To Chair A Committee</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Revision Notes</b>	<b>28</b>
2.0.1	28
2.0.2	28
2.0.3	28
2.0.4	28
2.0.5	28
2.0.6	28
2.0.7	28

## Introduction

When the Model Legislature was established in 1947, the echo of World War II still resounded loudly for most Americans; ensuring that future generations understood how lucky they were to live in a democratic society was a top priority. In response to this civic call, Rhode Island became the first state in the nation to offer students a hands-on simulation of the State's legislative process. Since that time, thousands of developing adults have had the opportunity to practice their legislative skills, and in some cases, have also found a pathway to their future careers. Involvement in Model Legislature is laudable, a great resume showcase, and an exciting opportunity for emerging future leaders of America.

### What Is Model Legislature?

The Rhode Island Model Legislature ("Model Legislature", "Model Leg.", "RIML", or "The Program") is an annual, statewide legislative simulation in which students are given the unique opportunity of stepping into the shoes of Rhode Island's Senators and Representatives in the General Assembly. Student-legislators have the opportunity to fill roles in all aspects of the process — from lobbyists to clerks, or Representatives to the Speaker of the House — while drafting, introducing, debating, and voting on legislation of their own, and their peers', creations.

All this hard work pays off on an annual Caucus and Committee Day, in which students will simulate caucuses for Model Legislature's two parties — The Conservatives and The Liberals — as well as serve on the Program's five committees in each chamber: (1) Health, Education, and Welfare; (2) Corporations and Finance; (3) Judiciary; (4) Labor; and (5) Special Legislation.

Finally, students have the opportunity of traveling to the Rhode Island State House for the annual General Assembly Day, in which they are seated in the actual Rhode Island Senate and House of Representatives. There, students use the actual microphones and voting machines to debate and tabulate amendments, motions, and cloture votes. Guest speakers — who, in the past, have ranged from State and Federal Lawmakers, State Administrative Executives, and Past Participants — set the civic tone by reminding students of the true importance of their civic endeavours. The Day comes to a close with an Award Ceremony for those who demonstrate outstanding commitment to the Program, along with a reading of all bills passed into Model Legislature Law. Finally, the Grand Committee, composed of both chambers, adjourns for the final time, marking the end of the legislative season.

## Positions

Model Legislature is made up of several positions, some on the local (Delegation) level, and some on the State (Leadership) level.

### Delegations

Delegations are the individual schools that subscribe to the Program. They are made up of several roles for students and educators alike.

### Advisors

Each delegation is run by an advisor, a teacher or faculty member who runs Model Legislature in their school. Advisors have free membership in the Rhode Island Council for the Social Studies for the duration of their service. They are responsible for supervising their high school club's meetings, registering their students with the state coordinators, creating digital accounts for their students, uploading draft bills, keeping their students apprised of upcoming deadlines, sitting on the RIML advisor's board, and other essential functions. Delegation advisors have discretion over their club's membership, and leadership promotion and demotion, and are the first point of contact for their respective students in Model Legislature. State coordinators will always defer to the recommendations of school program advisors in matters related to student conduct *within* the advisor's club, delegation, or school. Advisors will also supervise their students during Model Legislature's culminating events, the Caucus and Committee Meetings Night, and the General Assembly at the State House. Advisors will be asked to attend several meetings, either in person or via Zoom, at the start and during the Model Legislature season to meet with coordinators and be kept informed of the program's progress. Finally, Advisors will be asked to serve on the Leadership Selection Committee to help choose the session's leadership team and on the Awards Selection Committee to help determine which students should be recognized for extraordinary performances during the Model Legislature session. Any advisor serving on said committees may nominate a student, either their own student or one from another school, but having done so will not vote on that student's acceptance.

### Students

#### Senator and Representatives

Every school delegation is represented by two (2) Representatives in the House and one (1) Senator in the Senate (not including any leadership positions their delegation fills; leadership

positions do not count against a delegation's number of Senators or Representatives). However, a school may request for additional Senators or Representatives through a Program coordinator.

In addition, a delegation may have an unlimited number of their own: Clerks, Lobbyists, and Alternates; they are voting members in delegations only, and cannot vote during Committee or General Assembly.

### Clerks

Clerks help to coordinate their delegation's paperwork with their advisor, convey meeting dates and times, and manage notes and other functions during Caucus, Committee, and General Assembly days.

### Lobbyists

Lobbyists meet with Representatives and Senators from all delegations and urge them, based on arguments of their own creation, to vote in a certain direction. They are essential to helping bills pass, often working behind the scenes.

### Alternates

Alternates are students who are chosen to serve as an alternative to their delegation's Senators or Representatives, should those students be removed, are absent or leave the session early.

## Choosing Student Positions at the Delegation Level

Model Legislature, in recent history, has been able to accommodate requests for additional Senators and Representatives, at Program coordinator discretion. However, should this cease to be the case, or if an accommodation cannot be made, the Program recommends allowing your local delegation (all students participating) to either (1) send their senior-most students, or (2) vote from amongst themselves; or any combination of the two.

## Leadership Committee

The Leadership Committee is the group of students, advisors, administrators, and Program coordinators who run the Program. Students serve the functions and roles of Committee Chairs, Party Leaders, and Chamber Administrators, upon application to, and selection of, the Program coordinators and their Leadership Selection Committee (made up of advisors who volunteer to be on such committee).

## Leadership Selection Committee

Any advisor of any delegation may volunteer, to the Program coordinators, to serve on the Leadership Committee. This committee is tasked with interviewing and reviewing the applications thereof student applicants who wish to serve in a specific leadership position. This usually happens once a year in the beginning of the fall semester. The application and annual date(s) can be found on the Program's website.

## Committee Chairs

Committee Chairs, or in some cases Co-Chairs, are responsible for managing all bills assigned to their Committee. They can communicate with the authors, work with lobbyists, and coordinate with individual delegations on any amendments they plan on introducing. The Chairs should strive to encourage debate within their committee and guide students new to ML through the process. The Committee Chair(s) build a digital agenda of all legislation in their Committee, lead their Committee on Caucus and Committee Day (controlling debate, counting votes, calling bills, and recording amendments), and report on bills to the presiding officer of their Chamber during the General Assembly.

## Party Leaders

Each of the two Parties — Conservative and Liberal — guides their respective members, with the legislation they introduce, through an annual platform, which is published to the Program's website upon completion. This document requires ratification from the entire party upon Caucus and Committee Day (in other words, a vote from the entire party that they all agree with the sentiments and ideas expressed in the platform).

It is important to note that no party leader may vote in any committee, even if a bill they authored resides in the committee; they may only vote in the General Assembly. Leaders also hold no power to make motions in committee, other than points of order, parliamentary inquiry, or of information. They may, however, be yielded the chair by that Committee's Chairperson, at the Chair's discretion. The Program specifically notes that it is against the spirit of the program and the authority of any Leadership Committee member for any leadership student to: (1) be yielded the chair of a committee to force a particular action, (2) to encourage discourse from civil debate, (3) to attempt to coerce or force a desired vote, and or (4) take actions unbecoming of their positions.

To the last point, the Program expects all participants — students and advisors — to act in good faith. Simply put, for the purposes of the Program, an action "in good faith" is any action, decision, or other act of any individual, made jointly or separately, that, reasonably in their minds, and

objectively in the minds of any reasonable observer, had a legitimate and lawful purpose. (“Lawful” is with respect to delegation bylaws, Program rules and regulations, or actual laws, rules, and regulations of any legitimate authority of Rhode Island or of the United States).

### Conservative and Liberal Party Leaders

Each party has a single leader that controls leadership and entire party caucuses. They are the primary authors of their respective platforms, and help organize the thoughts and ideas of their members. They also have special powers during the General Assembly, such as the right to speak on any legislation once before a final vote on any legislation (after the Call to Question, but before the actual Question is voted on itself).

### Conservative and Liberal Whips

Each party has one or two whips who help coordinate votes in the Caucus and the General Assembly. They communicate the party’s platform to legislators, work with like-minded lobbyists, and foster unity amongst the party.

### Conservative and Liberal Clerks

The Clerk for each party is a back-up for vacant leadership positions, as well as each party’s member who records attendance, takes notes of party meetings, and coordinates the party platform.

## Chamber Administrators

Chamber Administrators, like party leaders, may never vote in any committee, even if a bill they authored resides in the committee; they also may never vote in the General Assembly, unless, per Robert’s Rules of Parliamentary Procedure, to (1) make or to (2) break a tie. Similarly to party leaders, Chamber Administrators also hold no power to make motions in committee, other than points of order, parliamentary inquiry, or points of information. They may, however, be yielded the chair by that Committee’s Chairperson, at the Chair’s discretion. The next two points are repeated for clarity and to stress their seriousness:

- (A) The Program specifically notes that it is against the spirit of the program and the authority of any Leadership Committee member for any leadership student to: (1) be yielded the chair of a committee to force a particular action, (2) to encourage discourse from civil debate, (3) to attempt to coerce or force a desired vote, and or (4) take actions unbecoming of their positions.
- (B) To the last point, the Program expects all participants — students and advisors — to act in good faith.. Simply put, for the purposes of the Program, an action “in good faith” is any action, decision, or other act of any individual, made jointly or separately, that, reasonably



in their minds, and objectively in the minds of any reasonable observer, had a legitimate and lawful purpose. (“Lawful” is with respect to delegation bylaws, Program rules and regulations, or actual laws, rules, and regulations of any legitimate authority of Rhode Island or of the United States).

### Chamber Leaders

There is one (1) Speaker of the House and one (1) President of the Senate who are the ultimate (student) authority in their respective chambers. They have the power to control debate, enforce Robert’s Rules, build the chamber’s agenda, and work with party leaders.

### Chief Clerks

The Chief Clerk of each chamber helps their Leader to build the agenda, enters final votes into the digital systems, along with amendments, and carries messages and other documents between chambers.

### Parliamentarians

Parliamentarians are the “resident experts” of each chamber on Robert’s Rules of Order and of the Program. They help the Leader make decisions on questions of the rules and arise violations of the rules when the Leader does not recognize them. Rulings of the Parliamentarian are final.

## Attendance Policy

Leadership team members are allowed one missed meeting only and the student is responsible for notifying the coordinators PRIOR to the meeting’s start that he or she will be absent. If a leadership team member arrives late to a training session, it is his or her responsibility to sign in. Missing more than one-half of a training session will count as an absence. However, leaving early due to illness or family emergency will be excused, as will a second absence for the aforementioned reasons if verified by the student’s delegation advisor. A leadership member with more than one unexcused absence may be removed from the Leadership Team and/or assigned a lesser position at the coordinators’ discretion.

## Checklists

The Program has developed several checklists, available on its website, to help guide the process for respective leaders. This is through Form 203, available at <https://www.rimodellegislature.com/forms-and-materials/>.

## Parties

There are two parties: Conservative and Liberal; legislators have the right to self-associate with whatever party they choose. In helping choose a party, students should speak with their advisor or use the quiz located on the website to help make this determination available at <https://www.rimodellegislature.com/party-quiz/>. Legislators are not bound by the quiz's suggestion for their party; it is a mere tool to aid in the party selection process based on answers to politically charged questions.

## Decorum

Decorum, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures, is

*“...generally is defined as appropriateness and propriety of behavior, conduct or appearance. Within the legislative environment, decorum relates to the proper order, etiquette and conduct of members during a floor session.*

Parliamentarians generally agree that debate should not be overly personal. As a result, most legislative assemblies have adopted rules of decorum that place focus on the issue being discussed, not the person speaking.

- Members should not refer to each other by proper name,,, [but] may... address each other by district number, geographic area, county, city or other respectful title. For example, 2017-2018 Missouri House Rule 85 requires a member to refer, as appropriate, to other members as “Lady,” “Gentleman” or “Representative.” According to parliamentarian Alice Sturgis, this practice serves as a reminder that a legislator is speaking not as an individual but as a representative of a constituency...”
- Indecent language and disorderly words are prohibited. For example, 2017-2018 Alabama House Rule 50 directs members to... “never use language that is profane, tasteless, vulgar or morally crude.”
- South Dakota Joint Rule 1B-1 offers another example of why decorum is important: “The people of South Dakota require that their legislators maintain the highest of moral and ethical standards as such standards are essential to assure the trust, respect and confidence of our citizens. Legislators have a solemn responsibility to avoid improper behavior and refrain from conduct that is unbecoming to the Legislature or that is inconsistent with the Legislature's ability to maintain the respect and trust of the people it serves...”

- <https://www.ncsl.org/research/about-state-legislatures/decorum-in-debate-a-short-primer.aspx>

## Authoring Legislation

Every delegation is guaranteed five (5) bills in each chamber, and every Senator and Representative is guaranteed the right to introduce at least one bill. This means that of the five (5) guaranteed in each chamber, every delegate must be able to at least write one.

The student authored bills are the heart of Model Legislature. Perhaps the best way to commence writing legislation is to brainstorm what problems need to be addressed by the state government. Is there anything that you have experienced personally that you feel was unjust? It does not have to be a problem of momentous importance. The best bills are those which, if adopted, would alleviate a problem.

### Questions to Ask Yourself

- Does the Rhode Island General Assembly have jurisdiction over the matter, or is it a federal or local issue?
- Are there any laws that currently address the issue? If so, have they been effective?
- Is the bill really needed or is the problem largely imaginary? Would the problem go away by itself?
- If adopted, how would your law be enforced?
- If adopted, how much would it cost? Where would the money come from?
- Is the proposed solution Constitutional?
- Is it a serious proposal?
- Is the bill debatable?

### Abbreviated Bill Format

Chamber Designation-Number-Year

An Act to... (Bill Title)

Introduced by (Delegate's Name), (Party), (School)

Section One: Definitions. All terms which could be misunderstood or need clarification are defined.

Section Two: Bill Body. This Section contains the law which is proposed for enactment.

Section Three: Penalties for violation of the proposed law.

Section Four: The date on which the law would take effect.

Section Five: List of current laws which are inconsistent with the provisions of this bill and would have to be

repealed or altered.

Section Six: A brief statement of why the law is necessary.

## Formatting Rules

All bills should fit on one page of 8 1/2 x 11 paper when printed on both sides; this translates to two (2) typed-pages maximum (exclusive of sources pages; see next paragraph). All margins should be one (1) inch in width/height. Bills must be submitted in Times New Roman font, size 12. Lines must be spaced single (1) or greater. Bills may be authored in whatever editor a student chooses, but are recommended to use their official @rimodellegislature.com accounts and the Google Docs editor associated with it. However, all bills must be submitted by advisors, through official portals to the program, in .PDF format.

When authoring legislation, all participants are still required to act in good faith, including academic honesty. Any “Works Cited” or “References” pages may also be included and do not count against the page total.

## Academic Integrity & Plagiarism

According to the *Modern Language Association*, plagiarism is

*presenting another person’s ideas, information, expressions, or entire work as one’s own. It is thus a kind of fraud: deceiving others to gain something of value. While plagiarism only sometimes has legal repercussions (e.g., when it involves copyright infringement—violating an author’s exclusive legal right to publication), it is always a serious moral and ethical offense.*  
(<https://style.mla.org/plagiarism-and-academic-dishonesty/>)

Plagiarism is committed by anyone who not only copies, alters, or uses another’s ideas or content without citation, but is also committed by those who submit it.

Academic integrity is the basis of honest scholarship. When students participate in Model Legislature, they are representing the best of the district from which they attend. Students therefore are responsible for upholding the disciplinary codes for plagiarism for the school

districts from which they represent. Cases of plagiarism will be subject to both Model Legislature sanction and be reported to the dean of students of the student's school.

If there is a question as to what is or is not plagiarism, always contact a Program coordinator **prior** to submission. The Program reserves the right to check all submissions against plagiarism software.

## Example: Formatting

### An Act to Teach Model Legislators How to Write Bills

Introduced by: Representative John Doe  
Conservative/Liberal, John Adams High School

#### **Section 1:**

*Section One* shall refer to the section where one writes definitions in this fashion. Italicize what is being defined and write the definition as a complete sentence.

*Bill* shall refer to...

#### **Section 2:**

- a) This section is where one puts what the bill is about and what exactly it does
- b) All Model Legislators must write bills in the given format

#### **Section 3:**

- a) Section 3 is for any penalties or punishments for not obeying the bill granted it passes
- b) Any bill that does not adhere to this format is likely to be discarded or put at the bottom of an agenda

#### **Section 4:**

- a) Section 4 is meant to specify when the bill will go into effect
- b) This bill will go into effect at the beginning of the 2015-2016 Model Legislature Calendar

#### **Section 5:**

Section 5 lists all the existing bills being amended, replaced, or abolished. This law amends § 1-1-1  
(*Write the bill title in italics after listing it numerically*)

#### **Section 6:**

The final section is an explanation of why the bill was written, and why it is relevant and worthy of support.

Section 6 can include attributions/citations with short quotes from outside authorities to support an argument (and to meet the criteria for students using this section of their bill as either an argument paper or a response to informational text), *but Section 6 should not exceed more than three paragraphs, nor make the total length of the actual bill any longer than 2 pages.*

NB: a bibliography or endnotes related to sources used to support the bill may go onto a third page.

## Example: Sample

	H-13-2013
<u>An Act to Reduce State Liability in Business Ventures</u> Introduced by Representative Jeremy M. Santerre Liberal, Exeter-West Greenwich High School	
<b>Section 1:</b> <i>Investment</i> shall refer to any contribution of money towards the purchase of shares in private organizations in order to generate economic stimulus, aid the prevalence of businesses in Rhode Island, and/or to seek long/short term profitability, which is repaid through dividends.  <i>Loan</i> shall refer to any contribution of financial assets to aid any private or public organization which is repaid at a determined rate with interest.  <i>Loan Guarantee</i> shall refer to the financial practice of promising to repay a loan or other debt on behalf of a borrower, should that borrower default.  <i>Audit</i> shall refer to the process of ascertaining the validity and reliability of financial information and to provide an assessment of a system's internal financial control through the use of financial records and market analysis.	
<b>Section 2:</b> a) Before the State Investment Commission can guarantee money to any private organization through investments, loans, and/or loan guarantees, the organization itself must undergo an audit by the Rhode Island Bureau of Audits.	
<b>Section 3:</b> Any person knowingly defrauding the system will be charged in a consistent manner with the type of fraud committed.	
<b>Section 4:</b> The law will go into effect immediately after its passage.	
<b>Section 5:</b> This law will not fall under the jurisdiction of § 35-10-8.	
<b>Section 6:</b> In light of the State's financial troubles and the 38 Studios issue, this bill will mandate a preemptive action to avoid to any future problems in the areas of finance involving the apportionment of State investments.	

## Instructions by Section

**Header** - In the top right-hand corner of the bill you will put your bill number. The number will be determined by the powers that be and you will be told it by your adviser. The number will be preceded by and H or S, and the number and letter will be separated with a hyphen. The letter is determined by whether or not you are a representative in the House, or a senator in the Senate. After the allotted bill number, put a dash with the year of Model Legislature the bill is being presented.

**Title** - The title should be centered and contain three lines. The first line is the title of the bill underlined.

By-Line - The second line should specify the bill author w, but should be written as: "Introduced by: Senator/Representative \_\_\_\_\_. Make sure to write your title (Senator, or Representative) before your name. The final line should specify your party affiliation, and what school you attend

Section 1 - Italicize any and all terms and words that need to be defined and then follow that with a definition in the form of a complete sentence. Define anything that could be misconstrued or you may be asked to specify. Put a space between each definition.

Section 2 - This is the meat of the bill. This is where you write down what the bill aims to do and how it plans to do so.

Section 3 - Section three is where you write down how people will be punished if they violate the bill. Accurately gauging punishment can be hard but reading other legislation can help in doing so. As a last result you can always read Dostoevsky and muse about the nature of the titular crime punishment.

Section 4 - This is where you specify when the bill will go into effect. The majority of bills will go into effect on the first of January the following year, but that is only a suggestion. If the bill is school related the first of August would be a better date, or if it is business related then pick the start of the fiscal year. When it will go into effect is really contingent on what exactly the proposed bill is affecting.

Section 5 - You would think this would be one of the easier sections, but it is the most time consuming section in a bill. You need to specify any existing legislation that would be in conflict in any way with your bill. For example, if my bill is changing the state drink of Rhode Island, I would put that "This law would amend §42-4-16." Section 5 is always a single sentence and does not require any bullets. The hard part is finding what bills yours will affect. To do so you must go to this page (<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/>) and search through all the legislation in the state. The more practice you get doing this, the easier it will get to determine where it may be. It also helps to learn how bills are organized. Each bill has a title, is located in a chapter, and each chapter is located in a section(symbolized with §), all three having their respective numbers. The final notation should be §Section #-Chapter #-Title #. It is also proper to put the italicized bill title in parenthesis after its citation.

Section 6 - Finally, this is where you write why the bill should be a bill. This can range from four sentences, to 2-3 paragraphs. Just keep in mind that Polonius asserted that "Brevity is the soul of wit" in Hamlet.



## Code of Rules and Regulations

1. Supremacy Clause
  - 1.1. The Handbook is the governing authority of the Program, unless otherwise stated.
  - 1.2. Robert's Rules of Order are always in effect to govern parliamentary debate in the program.
  - 1.3. However, if a conflict should arise between Robert's Rules and those outlined in the Rhode Island Model Legislature Handbook, the Handbook takes precedence.
2. Senator and Representative Rule
  - 2.1. Every delegation is guaranteed one (1) Senator in the Senate and two (2) Representatives in the House.
  - 2.2. Every Senator and Representative is guaranteed the right to introduce one (1) bill (individually) as the primary author.
3. Legislation Rule
  - 3.1. Every delegation is guaranteed five (5) bills in each chamber.
  - 3.2. Delegations may submit more than five pieces of legislation, but all submissions greater than the allotted five bills are subject to state coordinator approval.
4. Good Faith Rule
  - 4.1. All participants of the program — students and adults alike — are expected to act, at all times therein, in good faith.
  - 4.2. For the purposes of this program, “good faith” acts are those made, jointly or separately, by a person who, at the time of making such act, believed them to be (1) legitimate, (2) purposeful, and (3) lawful, and, furthermore, would be deemed as such by an objective and reasonable person prior-to, during, or after-the-fact.
  - 4.3. “Lawful” under this section refers to compliance with RI Model Legislature customs and rules as well as state and federal laws, rules, and regulations.
5. Committee Action Rule
  - 5.1. Committees shall take one of the following actions on each bill:
    - 5.1.1. Passage (without amendment);
    - 5.1.2. Passage (with amendment);
    - 5.1.3. Failure;
    - 5.1.4. Postponement (treated as failure); or
    - 5.1.5. Unheard (treated as passage).



- 5.2. The Committee Chair shall be the only legislator empowered and recognized for the purpose of reporting on bill action to the chamber leader during General Assembly, unless said Chairperson is absent, in which case any member of the Committee in question, who was present for the Committee's action, is present, and said person shall be empowered and recognized for the same purpose.
6. Bill Author's Rights
  - 6.1. The primary author of any bill shall have the right to speak on that bill prior to the floor being opened to debate.
  - 6.2. In cases of more than one author, the first bill author to appear on any legislation, who is present in the General Assembly, shall be the first legislator recognized to speak on their bill.
  - 6.3. Bill authors from the opposite Chamber may be recognized to speak on their bill but are not allowed to introduce any legislative action, unless yielded a full seat in that Chamber by one of its members.
7. Party Leaders' Rights
  - 7.1. The ranking party leader from the Conservative and Liberal parties shall be given the chance to speak on all legislation at the time of a final vote, after debate has been closed, but before the assembly takes the vote on the question itself.
8. Participation Rule
  - 8.1. Right to Speak
    - 8.1.1. Every member reserves the right to request to speak on any matter.
    - 8.1.2. Every member has the right to speak for two (2) minutes.
    - 8.1.3. No person may ever speak at one time for longer than two (2) minutes.
    - 8.1.4. No person may speak on a matter or motion more than once while another requests recognition.
    - 8.1.5. Upon speaking on a matter or motion twice, the person in question has exhausted their rights to debate and may not speak on that matter or motion again, even if no one else seeks recognition.
  - 8.2. The presiding officer of each chamber may not debate while chairing the chamber.
  - 8.3. No person may debate while chairing the chamber.
  - 8.4. No lobbyist shall be allowed to speak on chamber floors.
  - 8.5. Party leaders shall be the only legislators who may, once recognized, move for immediate consideration of any bill with a successful 2/3 majority vote.
  - 8.6. The question may only be moved on any legislation once two opposing speakers have been given a chance to speak on said legislation.

- 8.7. Only one motion may be considered at a time.
- 8.8. When a delegate is recognized, he/she shall rise and thank the leader, saying “Mr./Madam Speaker” (House) or “Mr./Madam President” (Senate).
- 8.9. The chamber or committee leader decides who can speak, without argument.
- 8.10. When a delegate has the floor, he/she shall not be interrupted unless the senator or representative is rising to a point of information, inquiry, or order, at which time the presiding officer can choose to respond.
- 8.11. When a delegate obtains the floor upon recognition by the presiding officer, he/she must confine remarks to the subject under debate, and not digress to comments on the personalities of fellow legislators.
- 8.12. There shall be no disorderly language or conduct in any open session of any chamber or committee.
- 8.13. There is to be no consumption of food or beverages in any chamber at any time.
- 8.14. Any legislator may move any action or motion by unanimous consent, including the chair or leader, which is treated as a unanimous passage, unless any legislator objects, at which point the motion is treated as a failure.
- 9. Changing of Model Legislature Rules
  - 9.1. These rules are only amendable, alterable, or suspendable by the State Coordinators.
  - 9.2. Motions to suspend, alter, amend, or eliminate these rules are out of order.
- 10. Academic Honesty
  - 10.1. Members are to follow the guidelines outlined in this handbook regarding plagiarism.
- 11. Knowing of Violations Rule
  - 11.1. Any individual with knowledge of a violation of these rules is required to report such immediately to their respective Advisor, or to a State Coordinator or an Administrator.
- 12. Complaint Rule
  - 12.1. Anyone may complain to the President of the Rhode Island Council for the Social Studies Association if they are aggrieved by the actions of another.
  - 12.2. Any accusations shall result in an investigation.
    - 12.2.1. The President of the Rhode Island Council for the Social Studies shall head any and all investigations.
    - 12.2.2. Any parties directly, or indirectly, involved in such matters may be required to submit written statements, or other answers, including material

- evidence, to the President, at the request of the President, within a reasonable amount of time.
  - 12.2.3. Refusal to respond to the investigation shall result in suspension from the program until the investigation has completed.
  - 12.2.4. The President shall control the timeframe, venues, and other discretionary elements of the investigation.
  - 12.2.5. Investigations are disposed of once the President is satisfied with the course and the matters discovered, at which point he or she shall have the power to decide for himself or herself, or to convene a committee of his or her choice to make said decision thereof, as to the punishment of the individual, which shall be limited to:
    - 12.2.5.1. Suspension or termination from Model Legislature;
    - 12.2.5.2. Sanctions such as letters of apology, conferences with the President to review such actions, and, if possible, amending the mistakes one has committed.
- 13. Policy Rule
  - 13.1. The Program coordinators may, at their discretion, implement policies to govern the use of special services, such as those relating to the Digital Platform.
- 14. Support System Rule
  - 14.1. All requests made to the Program must be submitted through the support system at [support.rimodellegislature.com](http://support.rimodellegislature.com), with the exception of those filed by paper using Form 301.
- 15. Right to Agenda Placement
  - 15.1. Every bill author has the right to have their bill be added to the agenda of the committee to which it resides.
  - 15.2. Every bill author has the right to have their bill added to the agenda of the chamber to which it resides, should it survive committee.
- 16. Policy Promulgation Rule
  - 16.1. Program State Coordinators or Administrators may promulgate policies, from time to time, at their discretion, to further structure these Rules of the Program.
  - 16.2. Any individual may petition a State Coordinator or Administrator to promulgate a policy.
- 17. Digital Platform Rules
  - 17.1. Only the delegation advisor of a student may create the [@rimodellegislature.com](mailto:@rimodellegislature.com) account for that student.

- 17.2. Only the delegation advisor of the primary author of a bill may submit the title and author-information of said legislation.
- 17.3. Only the delegation advisor of the primary author of a bill may submit said legislation.
- 17.4. Only the committee chair of a committee may enter the agenda, final votes, or amendments of that committee.
- 17.5. Only the chamber administrators (chamber leaders, clerks, and parliamentarians) of a chamber may enter the agenda, final votes, or amendments of that chamber.
- 17.6. No person shall intentionally access and/or use accounts, portals, or other material constructs located on the internet that relate to the Program that
  - 17.6.1. Do not belong to said person;
  - 17.6.2. Said person does not normally have access to;
  - 17.6.3. Said person is not entitled to access to; or
  - 17.6.4. Said person cannot act in good faith in using or accessing.
- 17.7. None of this section shall prohibit a State Coordinator or an Administrator from intervening on anyone's behalf and performing functions expected from said individual.
- 18. User Rights to Account Data
  - 18.1. The Program owns any document, email, spreadsheet, image, or other digital media created using rimodellegislature.com and any @rimodellegislature.com Google account.
  - 18.2. Any individual who is no longer a member of the Program shall have their account suspended as soon as immediately.
  - 18.3. Any individual who has been issued a @rimodellegislature.com account may request copies of their data prior to, or during, suspension.
  - 18.4. Any suspended account shall be deleted no sooner than ninety (90) days.
  - 18.5. Accounts may be suspended for due cause and/or violation of decorum
- 19. Constitutional Question Rule
  - 19.1. No bill may be introduced nor heard on the floor of the House or the Senate, or in their respective committees, if the bill in question directly alters the Constitution of the United States.
  - 19.2. No bill may be introduced nor heard on the floor of the House or the Senate, or in their respective committees, if the bill in question directly alters the Constitution of the State of Rhode Island; calls for a Constitutional Convention excepted.

- 19.3. A bill may only propose to submit to the voters a question as to an amendment to the Constitution; it shall never amend the Constitution itself.
  - 19.3.1. For a bill that requires a constitutional amendment, there must be a clear distinction mandating that only the question of the amendment is submitted to voters.
  - 19.3.2. Lawful Example: “An Act to Propose to Voters an Amendment to the Constitution to Rename the State”
  - 19.3.3. Unlawful Example: “An Act to Rename the State”
- 20. Party Platform Creation; Subject to Review
  - 20.1. All party platforms are subject to review, and must be submitted to, all State Coordinators prior to publication or distribution.
  - 20.2. State Coordinators reserve the right to reject, modify, alter, or otherwise control any and all party platforms to conform to RI Model Legislature decorum
  - 20.3. Statement of Intent: This Rule is intended to prevent issues that arose during the 73rd Session in which certain comments were introduced into a party platform and distributed without State Coordinator knowledge that included offensive language regarding homosexuality. Students have the right to express political ideals through their voting powers and debate rights; however, a party platform for the purposes of this Program must be inclusive to all members of that party.
  - 20.4. The Program bases the scope of this Rule around the standpoints of federal antidiscrimination statutes, and points to the spirit of Title VII.

## Robert's Rules of Order: At a Glance

Motion ("I move that we...")	Second required?	Debatable?	Type of Vote Required?	Purpose	Can the Mover interrupt?	Does the Mover need recognition?
Table...	Yes	No	Majority	Postpone a motion to a later time while in session	No	Yes
Call the question on...	Yes	No	2/3	Close debate on current motion	No	Yes
Limit the debate on... to...	Yes	Yes	2/3	Limit debate on current motion	No	Yes
Amend the motion...	Yes	Yes	Majority	Amend the current motion	No	Yes
Postpone indefinitely	Yes	Yes	Majority	Permanently postpone a motion	No	Yes
"I rise to a point of order."	No	No	None	Call attention to a violation of the rules of order	Yes	No
"I rise to a point of parliamentary inquiry."	No	No	None	Ask a question about procedure or rules of order	Yes	No
"I rise to a point of information."	No	No	None	Gain information about a motion	Yes	No
"I call for division."	No	No	None	Verify a vote cast in-doubt	Yes	No
Appeal the decision of the chair	Yes	At Chair Discretion	2/3	Reverse an error by the chair	Yes	No
Immediately consider bill...	Yes	No	2/3	Immediately end debate and vote on an action	No	Yes

## Digital Platform: A Redesigned Experience

### What is the Digital Platform?

The Digital Platform has a very broad umbrella, encompassing all parts of the Program as they relate to being digital. In other words, if any part of the Program is online, it is considered part of the Digital Platform.

The Digital Platform itself has several main components: a website, a repository, a YouTube Channel, and secure voting systems. These will be explored later in this chapter.

### What Changes does the Digital Platform Bring?

The Digital Platform does not change (in any meaningful way) the format, ideas, principles, and activities of Model Legislature; instead, it changes the way in which the Program is accessible to students and advisors alike:

- Bills and amendments are 100% digitally accessible to all students, at any time;
- All submissions are done digitally; and
- Any content of the Program is remotely accessible.

### The Website

The Program's website, <https://www.rimodellegislature.com>, is the main source of information related to Model Legislature. Everything students and advisors will need to do and know is hosted entirely from this website. Students and advisors are encouraged to spend time getting to know the website before their first session begins.

### Google's G-Suite for Nonprofits

The Program was able to gain access to Google's G-Suite for Nonprofits (essentially identical to G-Suite for Education). This gives students and advisors access to a whole host of applications and tools created by Google, and is included in the annual membership fee each school pays to participate in Model Legislature.

The Website is accessible via a public side and a private, individual side, utilizing Google's G-Suite and a WordPress Plugin that converts Model Legislature's G-Suite User Database into WordPress members. This means that anyone participating in the Program will have access to G-Suite apps, such as Docs, Sheets, Drive, Meet, and many more.

Anyone can see basic information about the program from the Website's public side (what any member of the public can see by going to the website, without having to log-in). Then, each student will be able to access the private side of the website using individual @rimodellegislature.com email accounts that their advisor creates for them; advisors will also be able to access the private side, but using static email accounts created by the Administrators. These same accounts are what gives students and advisors access to the other G-Suite functions.

## The Repository

The Repository is a subset of the Digital Platform that automates and hosts the bill submission process. Students still author bills digitally, and then send their completed bills as .PDF's to their local advisor. The advisor then submits their students' bills through online portals in two steps: (1) registering the title and author, along with being assigned a corresponding bill number, and (2) submitting the .PDF itself.

All submitted legislation is subject to review and approval from State Coordinators and/or Administrators. Once approved, bills will appear on the respective chamber's page on the website, in the "Bill Repository" section. All submitted legislation appears in the repository.

Committees will be assigned by State Coordinators, which also have their own individual calendars., under the respective Committee page in each chamber. Committee chairs will also digitize amendments. Each chamber has its own calendar, consisting of only bills that survive committee and in the order the chamber leader wishes to hear them.

## YouTube Channel

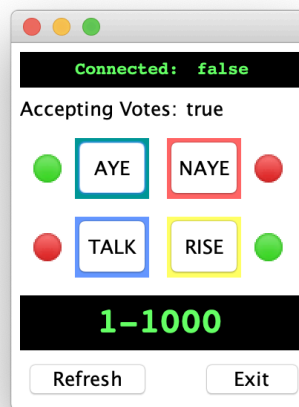
The Program has developed a YouTube Channel with tutorials and guides covering every step of the new process. This channel can be found by searching for "Rhode Island Model Legislature" on YouTube, or by navigating to rimodellegislature.com > Forms & Materials > YouTube Channel.

## Secure Voting Systems

In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, Program Administrator Nicholas R. Barrow developed a series of applications that recreate the voting machines from the State House, but digitally. These terminals provide simple access to the four core abilities a student has in the general session: voting for a motion, voting against a motion, requesting recognition on a motion, and rising to points of order, parliamentary inquiry, and information. What follows is an example of what may be available if the situation necessitates .



Each student will be emailed one-time access credentials to a specific system prior to needing to use that system. The downloads for this system are available at [rimodellegislature.com](http://rimodellegislature.com) > Forms & Materials > Secure Voting System Downloads. There is also a policy outlining the use and installation of these terminals at [rimodellegislature.com](http://rimodellegislature.com) > About > Policies & Memos > Secure Voting System; this policy should be read in detail by every student and advisor prior to using or downloading the systems.



### Additional Roles and Expectations: State Coordinators

- Assign bill numbers to registered titles.
- Review submitted legislation and render decisions on its publication.
- Assign committees to submitted legislation.
- Watch over the amendment process.
- Assist in creating agendas and inputting final votes.
- Manage website content.

### Additional Roles and Expectations: Administrators

- Ensure Google Sheets databases and forms are updated and properly functioning.
- Spectate all aspects of State Coordinators (above) with respect to the Digital Platform only.
- Help manage the support ticket system.

### Additional Roles and Expectations: Advisors

- Create and manage student accounts.
- Digitally submit all information.
- Submit tickets through [support.rimodellegislature.com](https://support.rimodellegislature.com) for any requests for Program help.
- Understand the new process, rules, and regulations.

### Additional Roles and Expectations: Students

- Use individual accounts.
- Understand the new process, rules, and regulations.
- Submit tickets through [support.rimodellegislature.com](https://support.rimodellegislature.com) for any requests for Program help.

## Glossary

Below is a list of common terms often encountered during the RIML sessions.

- Act - A bill passed by both houses of the General Assembly
- Appropriation - A legislative authorization of money for a specific purpose
- Author - The member who introduces a bill
- Bicameral Legislature - A legislature with two houses, ex. House and Senate
- Bill - A proposed law presented for enactment
- Caucus - A closed meeting of a group of persons belonging to the same political party
- Joint Resolution - A form of legislation that is passed in joint sessions of the General Assembly (both houses are present), usually for an amendment to the RI constitution, or to extend official message
- Legislative Day - The day on which a house of the General Assembly meets
- Meeting - A gathering of members
- Motion - A proposal of action, see Robert's Rules of Order on page 10
- Model Legislature – synonym for the student version of the General Assembly and for the activities on Legislative Day
- Presiding Officer - President of the Senate, Speaker of the House, or chairperson where applicable
- Sponsor - A member who agrees to introduce and support a bill in the opposite chamber in which the bill originated. The author should arrange for sponsorship of their bill previous to the submission of bill titles.

## Addendum A: How To Chair A Committee

### How to Chair a Committee

- **Chair calls the committee to order**
- **Chair reads title of bill** "We will now turn to "[bill title]" and states "I now give the committee two minutes to read bill." If the chair has access to a timer, they should set it for two minutes.
- **Discussion/Debate of Bill/Act**
  - After two minutes the chair opens discussion: "[bill title]" is now open for discussion"
  - Committee members who wish to debate the bill should raise a hand and wait to be recognized. Chair should note the order that members have raised their hand.
  - Chair should verbally recognize each new speaker. If the next speaker is Mary Smith, the chair should say aloud "Representative Smith" to note that Mary Smith now has the floor
  - Author of bill (if present) has the right to speak first
  - Each committee member should have an opportunity to speak before any member can speak their second time
  - Each member has the right to speak twice before the bill is called into question
  - Discussion should be pertinent to the subject at hand (or can be ruled out-of-order)
  - **Decorum:** committee members should always be polite to each other, defer to the chair, never interrupt when anyone else is speaking, refer to each other as "esteemed colleague" or "honorable representative" and never make personal attacks or off-color remarks.
- **Amendment process**
  - Proposals to amend the bill must be seconded "Does anyone second the amendment?"
  - Amendments must be in writing, must note the section being amended, the new language, and where to insert the new language.
  - Once given to the chair, committee discuss the amendment "We will now discuss an amendment to "An Act to \_\_\_\_\_" - then follow rules for discussion above
  - Committee must then vote on the amendment
  - Chair: We will now continue the discussion on "An Act to \_\_\_\_\_"
- **Call the question – vote to end discussion/debate**
  - Any member can call the question by stating "I would like to call the question."
  - Chair should make certain that every committee member who wanted to speak has had the opportunity. If so, the chair says: "We will now vote to move the question. All in favor say aye? All in in favor say nay?"
  - If it is too close to tell from voice acclamation, then the chair can "call for division" and have a recount via show of hands or by standing.
  - If the vote is nay, then the chair announces "the vote to call the bill "An Act to \_\_\_\_\_" into question has failed. We will now continue the discussion on the bill "An Act to \_\_\_\_\_"
  - This continues until discussion has ended, and a vote to call into question has been successful
- **Vote:** "We will now vote on the bill "An Act to \_\_\_\_\_"
  - "All in favor say yea?"
  - "All opposed say nay?" count nays
  - If it is too close to tell from voice acclamation, then chair can "call for division" and have a recount via show of hands or by standing.
- **Announce results by reading entire title of act and whether it passed or failed, then move on to next bill. If all business is finished, a member of the committee should make a motion to adjourn**
  - Motion to adjourn cannot interrupt a speaker who has the floor, must be seconded, can't be debated or amended, and must have a majority vote.

## Revision Notes

### 2.0.1

- Converting the old handbook to Google Docs.
- No language or content changed.

### 2.0.2

- Adding new program features, rules, and regulations.
- Modernizing language from the old handbook.
- Formatting and styling changes.
- Minor changes to content and language.

### 2.0.3

- Added new information about the Digital Platform.
- Digital Platform language and content added.

### 2.0.4

- Fixed cell padding on “Robert’s Rules: At a Glance” to allow the table to fit on one page.

### 2.0.5

- Restructured and reformatted rules section.
- Added Rule 21, 22.

### 2.0.6

- Minor language changes made by State Coordinator(s).
- No major content changes made.

### 2.0.7

- Added “Addendum A: How To Chair A Committee”

## 2.0.8

- Academic Honesty & Plagiarism section revised and title changed to Academic Integrity & Plagiarism
- Clarified role and duties of advisors
- Streamlined and clarified the Code of Rules and Regulations
- Added Decorum (quoted from the National Conference of State Legislatures webpage. <https://www.ncsl.org/research/about-state-legislatures/decorum-in-debate-a-short-primer.aspx>)