

Mr. Speaker (1965) Video Worksheet

This worksheet is designed to help you gather information about the activities and roles by members of the Texas House of Representatives. The worksheet requires that you record information from the video by filling in blanks and answering questions. After you finish watching the video, you will need to conduct outside research to compare the 59th Legislative Session, as represented in the video, to the Texas State Government today.

- I. Complete the information in the right column with information generated by the film *Mr. Speaker* (1965). Upon the completion of the film, define key terms and summarize key points in the column to the left. Use outside sources as needed.

Key Points	<i>Mr. Speaker</i>
<p>Define <i>Special Session</i>:</p> <p>Define <i>Resolution</i>:</p>	<p>Every <u>two</u> years, or when called into special session by the governor, <u>181</u> elected representatives of the people of Texas convene here at the state capital in Austin and in the words of the constitution, “consider all <u>bills and resolutions</u> and other matters then pending.” The regular session is <u>140</u> days long. Special Sessions, when needed, are a maximum of 30 days each.</p>
<p>Why do you think the House of Representatives is considered the most responsive arm of state government in Texas?</p>	<p><u>150</u> of these elected officials are members of the House of Representatives. They are chosen by the citizens of their district for a period of <u>two years</u>. They may be re-elected as many times as their constituents choose. The House of Representatives is considered by many students of government to be the most responsive arm of our democratic system – the voice of government closest to the <u>people</u>.</p>
<p>What does the membership of the House of Representatives look like today? How has terminology changed?</p>	<p>House of Representatives 1965 Membership:</p> <p><u>63</u> lawyers</p> <p><u>43</u> businessmen</p> <p><u>19</u> farmers and ranchers</p> <p><u>14</u> educators</p> <p><u>1</u> lady lawmaker</p> <p><u>120</u> college graduates</p>

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<p>What is a committee in the state legislature? Example.</p>	<p>Since <u>January</u>, this body of men has considered more than <u>1800</u> proposed laws. Of that number, approximately <u>600</u> will have become law of the State of Texas when the legislature adjourns. These men are divided into <u>43</u> committees, which conduct hearings and do the real work of the legislature in long hours of meetings scheduled from 6 am until the wee hours of the morning.</p>
<p>What do you think would be possible reasons for lawmakers to disagree on proposed actions?</p>	<p>The 150 voices in this chamber represent regions as widely separated as <u>700</u> miles. They represent <u>economic</u>, <u>geographic</u>, and <u>sociological</u> problems and interests so diverse as to seem almost foreign to each other. It is the responsibility of this body to reconcile its enormous natural differences in dealing with the problems of our time, and in the space of <u>140</u> days, achieve sound, united action necessary for the well-being of this state for the next two years.</p>
<p>Summarize the responsibilities of a state representative.</p>	<p>In the hours when they are not here on the floor, participating in deliberation or voting on various issues, the individual members face busy schedules of their own. They must find time to confer with <u>their own staff</u> in offices in the capital building on matters of pressing importance. The inevitable flow of mail and telephone calls must be answered. Visitors from back home, some merely on sightseeing trips, many others with problems having to do with <u>legislation or state agencies</u>, take time. Important <u>committee</u> meetings and conferences must have priority consideration in the planning of a daily schedule. And sometime in the busy day, or often late at night, the conscientious lawmaker finds time to inform himself on the numerous bills under consideration. He must do hours and hours of research and reading to make sure that his is a sound judgment when he presses that button which helps govern the people of Texas.</p>

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	<p>difficult job to appoint these committees in a way that the House will function in the manner in which the Speaker wants the House to function and in a way that we will have a constructive session of the legislature.... Another thing the speaker does is, every session there are some <u>1100–1200</u> bills introduced in the House. The Speaker must read each one of these individually and refer them to the <u>committee</u> for consideration.”</p>
<p>Define <i>ratify</i></p>	<p>Cooperation between the two arms of the legislature is important to every session and Speaker Barnes works closely with <u>Lieutenant Governor</u> Preston Smith, presiding officer of the <u>Senate</u>, to assure effective liaison. This afternoon, they are spending a few moments together, along with another House leader, to iron out a minor problem that has arisen during the morning. The teamwork of these two leaders is vital to Texas, since all legislation originating in either house must be ratified by <u>the other House</u> before it can become law.</p>
<p>Why would it be helpful for the branches of government to work together when possible?</p>	<p>This afternoon, Speaker Barnes reviews with the Chief Executive developments on one of the governor’s key proposals of the current session. Cooperation and coordination between the <u>legislative</u> and <u>executive</u> branches is essential to a harmonious and productive session. In January, shortly after the legislature convened, Governor Connally presented to a joint session his recommended legislative program. Both houses have the option to <u>approve</u> or <u>amend</u> or <u>substitute</u> for the administration’s proposed measures, as well as originate many more proposed bills of their own. Every bill, when finally passed by both houses, must be signed by the governor before it becomes <u>law</u>. If he chooses to veto or disapprove a bill, both houses must again pass the measure, this time by a <u>two-thirds</u> vote, to override his veto, or become law without his consent.</p>

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- II. Critical Thinking: Think about the information gathered from *Mr. Speaker* (1965), class discussion, and any outside sources before answering the questions below.

Thinking about the changes in the politics and demographics of the members of the State of Texas Legislature and the makeup of the people in the state, do you think it would be easier or more difficult to pass legislation? Why or why not? What might be easier for State Representatives today than it was during the 59th Legislative Session? Harder? Explain your answers fully and use examples when possible.