
Legislative Brief (130 total points)

Final Submission Date: Saturday, April 28, 2018

The purpose of the Legislative Brief is to track the development of a social welfare policy introduced in the 2018 Georgia Legislative Assembly. The process involves selecting a bill that is being introduced during the legislative session. Topics are dependent upon which bills are introduced in the session, but may include issues such as child welfare, community development, public assistance, health services, disability services, mental health, immigration, or services/benefits that have a direct impact on the social welfare of individual communities or groups. Students should avoid selecting appropriation or budget bills or resolutions on any topic.

Major features of the Legislative Brief will involve interviewing several key persons invested in the development and implementation of the legislative bill. Generally, regardless of the immediate focus of the bill, every legislative response will have some impact on a community. As such, each submitted brief **must** consider the effects of the selected legislation on the community at large. You may obtain this information from speaking with legislator(s), the legislators' aids, agency representatives, and community representatives (e.g., recipients of service provisions, administrators of agencies providing services, advocacy groups). Each student must seek the opinions of those with various viewpoints on the issue covered in the selected legislation and discuss in the assignment which groups and individuals are supportive and which groups are non-supportive of the legislation, and the bases for their positions.

Students may work in small groups (2-3 students only) to track a particular bill, but each student in the group MUST independently submit their own complete Legislative Brief, as described below.

PRODUCT FORMAT: The Legislative Brief will be submitted in an online format using a website (e.g., Google sites, foliofor.me, weebly, foliospace, Mahara, or edublogs. For this assignment DO NOT USE PREZI). Each of these sites offers tutorials to assist in learning how to use the appropriate software.

Each section of the brief should be crafted as a separate page in the portfolio website, with the references outlined on a separate page.

You must cite a minimum of TEN SCHOLARLY REFERENCES in your brief (e.g., peer review journal articles, books, monographs, etc.) to support the context of the social problem being addressed in the legislative bill. **PLEASE NOTE-Wikipedia, ASK.com, and other similar sources are NOT scholarly resources and they should not be used as a scholarly reference for your research.** APA (American Psychological Association) style must be used for text citations and reference pages. Please review the assignment rubric to assess full performance on the assignment.

THE FINAL BRIEF CONTENT MUST FOLLOW THE OUTLINE BELOW USING THE SPECIFIC SUB-HEADINGS. The information under each section serves as a guide for the content that must be included in your portfolio; other relevant information may also be included:

1. PROBLEM DEFINITION (20 points)

The introduction to the legislative brief describes the social issue or problem that is addressed by the state legislature. You must give background information with some descriptive indicators (social, economic, political or other relevant indicators) about the type and severity of the problem and the effects of the problem on the state, communities, or specific population groups.

- a. What is the specific problem/issue addressed in the state bill
- b. What are the objective indicators that the problem exists in the state or a community (Use U.S. census data sources, state data sources, community survey results to support your problem description.)
- c. Describe which groups are most affected by the problem, and evidence to support your description.
- d. How does the problem impact people/communities, either positively or negatively?
- e. Is the problem present in every community in Georgia, or certain localities? Does the problem “look the same” across different localities? What evidence supports your position?
- f. Which types of people are most affected by the problem? Are all people impacted similarly or are there differences? Again, provide state or local data to support your problem description.
- g. Is there a similar problem in other states? For example, compare counties or states with national data on the issue, if appropriate.

2. STATE POLICY ANALYSIS (20 points)

Address each of the questions below:

- a. What are the goals of the legislative bill? What does it hope to achieve?
- b. What specific services or benefits will come from the proposed solution? (e.g., new/amended programs, extended access to services for marginalized groups, new monetary benefits, including tax credits) are proposed to address the defined problem?

- c. Who is eligible to receive benefits/services? What groups will be excluded from receiving services/benefits, and why?
- d. Is there consensus or conflict among various interested parties on what the bill proposes as a solution? What is the intended outcome to result from the proposed solution to the problem?
- e. Are there any possible unintended consequences, and what provisions are made to address them?

3. LEGISLATIVE PROCESS (20 points)

Describe the process the legislation went through during the legislative session:

- a. Is the bill an amendment to an existing law? If yes, cite the law. What are the changes/differences between the existing law and the bill?
- b. What committee was the bill assigned? Who is the chair of that committee?
- c. Was the bill assigned to a sub-committee? Who chaired the sub-committee?
- d. Were there any public hearings on the bill? If there were any public hearings on the bill, what individuals/groups gave testimony in the hearings? What issues were raised during the hearings by those giving testimony and/or by the legislators?
- e. Were there any lobbyists working for/against the bill? What were their positions on the bill?
- f. Did the content of the bill change while in committee? Who advocated for these changes, and why? Did the changes alter the original intent of the bill, positively or negatively? Was there consensus/conflict on the bill's changes?
- g. Was there a committee vote on the bill? What was the vote count?
- h. Were other bills introduced in the legislature to address the same problem? If so, what was the purpose of this tactic? Cite the other bills introduced.
- i. If two bills addressing the same problem progressed through both chambers of the legislature, did the sponsors of the bills compromise or negotiate to join or eliminate one bill? What were the strategies of the bills' sponsors? What did they hope to accomplish?
- j. Was there any floor discussion about the bill in the House and/or Senate? What impact did this have on the bill's outcome?

- k. Were there any floor votes on the bill? What was the final count? How did your personal legislators vote on the bill?
- l. What role did the Governor have on the bill's progress through the legislature?

4. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION (20 points)

- a. What agency will have responsibility for administering the bill if it becomes law (e.g., what governmental agency will execute the bill (e.g., Department of Human Services, Division on Aging, Public Health Services)?
- b. What type of programs or services will the bill provide? Does the bill propose to support existing services or establish new services?
- c. How will recipients receive any services or benefits under the legislation? Is a new/modified service delivery system required, or is the current service delivery system sufficient under the legislation?
- d. How will any new services/programs be financed under the legislation or is the legislation fiscal neutral (no new public monies are required)
- e. Is there a fiscal note accompanying this bill, if so how much money is requested by the sponsor?
- f. Are requested/current monetary resources adequate to meet the legislation's objectives.

5. COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS (20 points)

The following community representatives **must** be interviewed for your paper:

1. One or more sponsors of the bill. (Generally, the first name on the bill is the originator of the bill. He/she will have the most knowledge about the problem and the solution proposed in the bill);
2. Your personal state legislators (Senator and Representative) to gain their perspective on the problem/issue being addressed by the bill and the proposed solution expressed in the bill;
3. At minimum, **two** community representatives who would be affected by the bill to gain their perspective about the problem and solutions to the problem (e.g., front line social workers, agency administrators, a member of an advocacy/lobbying group, recipients of services, or other community residents who will be directly impacted by the bill).

Present the following information on interviewed stakeholders:

- a. How do stakeholders define the problem?
- b. Do other interested parties (community representatives, clients, agency representatives) define the problem differently or the same?
- c. Are there differences on how the problem is defined between the sponsors of the bill and other invested groups? Who disagrees that a problem exists, and why? What is their perception of what is occurring with the issue?
- d. Do stakeholders agree or disagree with the **proposed solution** to the problem?
- e. Is there disagreement about how the problem should be resolved among stakeholders?
- f. What alternative solutions were offered to resolve the problem by stakeholders?

Please Note: Other questions may be asked based on the focus of the social problem and legislative response.

The above sections are the heart of the paper and careful attention should be given to it. Be analytical, not just descriptive.

6. PERSONAL REFLECTIONS (20 points)

As a social worker, present your perspective about the social problem, the proposed solution, and the legislative process. **Discuss each point below in the portfolio:**

- a. Review the NASW Code of Ethics. What are the ethical strengths/weaknesses of the proposed solution to the social problem?
- b. What ethical dilemmas might be evident as a result of implementing the legislative bill? Give comments on how the policy may affect individuals, families, communities, or practicing social work professionals.
- c. What did you learn about the ethics of policymaking based on your observations, interviews, discussions with legislators and community stakeholders? [Be critical in your analysis, not just descriptive].
- d. Present your position on the bill.

- e. Discuss how this bill will/will not resolve the problem as defined by legislators and/or persons affected by the problem?
- f. Do you anticipate any unintended consequences (e.g., new problems emerge as a result of the implementation of the state law)?
- g. What areas or sections of the bill would you recommend needs modification in order to address any concerns, and what action steps would you implement to address those concerns. Similarly, what aspects of the bill are good for addressing the problem and should therefore be protected?
- h. How will this bill enhance social justice for targeted individuals/groups?
- i. Discuss how this bill aligns/does not align with your personal values?
- j. Finally, what insights did you gain about policy making from participating in the legislative process?

Again, be analytical in your thinking, and not just descriptive.

7. References (10 Points)

List of 10+ references in APA format.

While a photo portfolio is no longer required for the Legislative Brief, you may want to consider adding photos to your brief website from your various visits to the capitol. You may find legislators appreciate and respond well to the attention of documented photos and it will be your personal keepsake of this phenomenonal experience. :)