



## **ASSOCIATED STUDENTS, INC.**

California State University, Los Angeles

### **Tips for Writing and Passing an Effective Resolution**

#### **1. Build a Broad Coalition. Writing the resolution should not be the starting point.**

First, it is critical to build a diverse group of community members who support your efforts. This enables your group to demonstrate to your local legislative body that your concerns are valid and important and that local community members are educated on the issues. Building public support also helps to demonstrate to your legislative body why it is a local issue.

Additionally, if you choose to have a resolution or ordinance to increase monitoring about how the USA PATRIOT Act is being implemented, it is best to obtain the prior approval of the government agency that will be doing the monitoring. Many communities have Human Rights Commissions that may be willing to carryout monitoring.

#### **2. Study legislative processes in your own Associated Students.**

Organizations have different procedures, so speak with an Executive member and support staff as to the process of putting your resolution on the agenda.

You may want to even approach other Board of Director members to help with drafting the resolution, which you can collaboratively revise. Feel free to show the members a list of universities that have passed resolutions and to give them a sample resolution.

#### **3. Focus on using mandatory language**

Use (“shall” “must” “will”, etc.) versus discretionary language (“we encourage x body to...” “may”, etc.). Mandatory language helps to create a binding duty for the adopting body. However, your resolution cannot have binding authority over other bodies that your adopting body represents, but does not have jurisdiction over- for these bodies the resolution can only “urge” them to act.

#### **4. Be textually accurate.**

In describing all laws and regulations, try to quote textual language or summarize directly from the textual language, citing the relevant section of the Act. Avoiding sweeping allegations or broad textual summaries will bring credibility and factual accuracy to your resolution and will also steer the discussion away from rhetoric towards meaningful discourse.

#### **5. Allow for revisions.**

It is important to have some flexibility for compromises that may be necessary to pass the resolution in your legislative body.

#### **6. Maintain your community network.**

As you may have to play watchdog to make sure the provisions or your resolution or ordinance are properly implemented, it is vital to keep your group connected and continuously informed.

### **Additional Guidelines for Resolution Writing**



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Writing resolutions is a specialized skill. The resolution is one very long sentence directing the organization to take a stand or engage in some action. It can also commend or take exception to actions of other entities. It must not provide direct instructions to any group other than the Associated Students, Incorporated or its president and board of directors. The actions or other recommendations are contained in the resolves at the close of the resolution. The argument for taking the action is laid out in a series of WHEREASes. Ideally each argument and only one argument should be placed in a single whereas. These should be arranged in the most logical order possible.

The most efficient way to write a resolution is to make a simple outline or list of premises which you will turn into the WHEREAS clauses and a similar simple list of phrases for the RESOLVED clauses. In fact, you should begin by determining what your RESOLVED clauses are; that is, how many there should be and what their basic thrust is. You will know how many by the number of entities we need to address or the number of problems we need to fix. After you decide specifically how you want the problem fixed, determine the smallest number of concepts you need to explain to a person unfamiliar with the problem that there is a problem. The best resolutions can be picked up by a person unfamiliar with the issue and hold that person's attention (in other words, are as short as possible) while still actually explaining the problem and the solution or solutions. This method, deciding the ending first and then crafting the arguments to reach it, will result in the simplest and clearest resolution. Then, when you actually write the formal resolution, you can focus on the writing and the style, having already done the thinking part.

Here are the punctuation and layout rules for writing resolutions:

- Each argument begins with the word WHEREAS, indented and all caps. BE IT RESOLVED and BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, which introduce the resolve sections, are also indented and written in caps. Note that WHEREAS is followed by a comma, but the two versions of be it RESOLVED are not.
- Each WHEREAS before the final one ends with a semicolon and the word “and.” This is true of the RESOLVES as well.
- The final WHEREAS ends with a colon, the words “Now, therefore,” and a hard return. Please note that Now is capitalized.
- The final RESOLVE ends with a period. This reflects the fact that the entire resolution is a single sentence.
- Sometimes one is taxed to refrain from writing sentences within WHEREASes, but inserting a complete sentence is not playing the game fairly.
- A blank line separates the elements of the resolution.

The rather strained form of the resolution makes it sound unnatural and formal. Do not attempt to add to this effect by indulging in jargon and verbosity. Even though resolutions are frequently long, brevity is a virtue. Each argument should be made concisely but clearly. Jargon never helps this process. Substituting “utilize” for the short, vigorous word “use” and always referring to people as persons or individuals are good examples of counterproductive inflation of the pomposity quotient. On the other hand, because resolutions are formal statements of a policy position, you should avoid slang or informal words like “exams” instead of “examinations” or “quotes” for “quotations.” Verb forms like “hunker down” or “get going” are also a bit too casual for use in resolutions.

Capitalization should be consistent. Do not capitalize words for emphasis. Quotation marks should not be used for this purpose either. “Federal” is not capitalized unless it is part of an actual title or is the first word of a sentence. Since



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WHEREASes do not begin with capital letters, federal is almost never capitalized in resolutions. “Congress,” on the other hand, is, as are “House of Representatives” and “Senate.” Names of departments and organizations are capitalized, but terms like “departments of education” or “vocational rehabilitation agencies” should not be.

Resolutions often pile up nouns as adjectives. When this happens, the terms should be hyphenated: Web-site creators, access-program producers.

Bill numbers are written H.R. 0000 or S. 0000.

### **Writing Project Proposals**

There are two main reasons to write a project proposal. Either someone has invited you to submit a RFP (Request for Proposal); or you are trying to gain support or funding from your own or another organization.

Every sponsor will want to see a solid plan in addition to the project detail. They’ll want to know the organization’s mission, its goals, its steps to achieving those goals, its offered programs and services, its available resources, the market, and your organization’s edge in that market.

When drafting a proposal the most important thing to keep in mind is that the reader is looking for benefits; they want to know how your idea adds value to their operation. Therefore your proposal must be well-written and it also must clearly indicate how you can fulfill a current need.

Here are a few tips to help you improve your proposal:

1. Make the proposal about your target audience. A proposal is not the time to tell about your mission, your locations, or how long you have been in business. Instead you should state how these (or any other) aspects benefit your client.
2. Show and don’t tell. Do not tell your prospect what you can do for them, but show them using clear examples. Avoid unsubstantiated hype like “cutting edge”; unless you are willing to prove it.
3. Be careful not to include irrelevant information. If you are making the proposal about the reader, and showing instead of telling, then you should have no problem with this.
4. If you are responding to a RFP, read the request more than once. You want to ensure that you completely grasp the requirements.
5. Show your creditability. Who have you worked with before? How did you help them and how does that relate to the company or group you are submitting this proposal to?
6. Watch your language. It is very important to make sure your proposal is politically correct. Additionally, you want to avoid jargon unless it is commonly known to the entity you are targeting. Also, avoid writing in passive voice.
7. Include samples if it is appropriate. This is a great way to show that you are capable of handling the job.
8. Be specific. State your time frame for completing and assessing the project (if applicable). This will help eliminate differences in expectations.
9. Finally, read and re-read your work; if possible have a qualified individual check your work. Then go back over everything and make improvements until you feel confident in your proposal. Written communication is a crucial part of your funding proposal and someone should guide you through the process by proofreading the materials, to check for spelling, grammar, factual accuracy and overall quality of presentation.

### **How to Write a Petition**



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What is a petition? A petition is a document which intends to change the status quo by flaunting the signatures of the number of people who are in favor of the change. There are all sorts of petitions written. But across the board, people see that the petition is a powerful enough instrument to ensure a change of heart in whoever it is being sent to. And when there is an overwhelming response and sign on to the petition, it gets mileage to succeed.

Although all this made the petition seem like a fancy bit of paper and the petition format something of intricate detail, it isn't so. The format for petition contains only two main parts: the content specifying the cause, and the signatures of the individuals in support.

A quick couple of things to be kept in mind include the language and the formatting. Writing a petition requires a good command over the language. Secondly, the petition being a formal document, it needs to be written that way, the address, the words and the signing off all need to adhere to strict formality. Remember, this is formal letter written to an authority, requesting some sort of change and backed up by a large group of undersigned.

Begin drafting your petition by first determining the problem that you wish to address. It should be genuine, and concern a large group of people. The details of the petition should be explained within 2-3 lines. No one will read long petitions. Then address the concerned details regarding the problem. Do not include irrelevant or unnecessary details in your petition.

- Your cause for the petition should essentially comprise three points: the description of the situation, the requirement, and the purpose of the requirement. Moreover, the requirement is meant to be in keeping with the standard laws that prevail, else it will be considered invalid.
- Then identify the organization this petition is aimed at.
- Identify the body concerned with the subject of your petition. Filing a petition with the right area or department is essential for it to get properly considered for sanction.
- Understand the petition guidelines that vary among the different organizations. For any petition, a certain number of signatures are required for it to be considered. Find out how many you will need for your petition.

No Excess Pension for Top UC Executives Petition: <http://www.gopetition.com/petition/41718.html>