

Creating a Legislative Proposal

An effective legislative proposal must tell a story in a clear, efficient manner and must be geared toward encouraging legislative action aimed at a solution. Here are some things to include and some things to avoid when creating an effective legislative proposal.

TRY TO:

- **CREATE A CLEAR, CONCISE TITLE FOR YOUR RESOLUTION.** Often your proposal's reader will only have time to glance at the title when reviewing a number of legislative proposals in succession. The title should give the reader as much information as possible, without becoming too cumbersome.
- **USE COMPLETE SENTENCES WHEN DESCRIBING THE PROBLEM, ITS CONSEQUENCES, AND THE PROPOSED ACTION.** In most cases, the audience will not understand the issues as well as the author of the proposal. This is an educational process and failure to clearly inform the audience may lead to the proposal's rejection.
- **IN THE DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM SECTION, TRY TO RE-STATE THE CURRENT LAW.** If the current law is causing part of the problem, the reader should be informed of that fact, many will not be well versed in that particular area. The audience needs to know what is to be changed.
- **ALWAYS TRY TO INCLUDE A STATEMENT EXPLAINING WHAT MAY HAPPEN, OR CONTINUE TO HAPPEN, IF NO ACTION IS TAKEN.** In particular, legislators need to know the consequence of inaction.
- **OFFER YOUR PROPOSED ACTION OR SOLUTION TO THE LEGISLATIVE PROBLEM IN A PROACTIVE, POSITIVE WAY.** Remember, you are proposing a solution, which requires discussion, action, and moving ahead. Even if your proposed solution involves repealing some undesirable law, the action taken is proactive.

THINGS TO AVOID:

- **DO NOT USE ABBREVIATIONS.** People are short on time, and may not always be able to be thorough in constructing a proposal. However, the audience may not always understand what the author of the proposal is getting at when abbreviations are used. For example, human services professionals will likely know that MFIP means Minnesota Family Investment Program, but many legislators may not.
- **AVOID NEGATIVE MESSAGES.** A legislative proposal that is seen by the reader as punitive or overly negative will likely be rejected.
- **AVOID BEING VAGUE.** Focus your proposal on achieving a solution. The reader will likely review the proposal with the attitude of "what would you like me to do?" You do not want your reader to be confused or make unwarranted assumptions about your proposal.

Following these steps will assist you in developing a legislative proposal, which transmits a clear message to the reader. The audience may not agree with the proposal and may not offer support but the issue will have been raised and addressed in the process.