

Writing a Resolution

A resolution is the best way to formally organize a target goal or program and its implementation as a NOW policy or mandate of leadership. It gives instruction for action between the members of Maryland NOW and its governing bodies – the Maryland NOW State Conference and the Maryland NOW State Council and Executive Committee.

This communication may be to mandate funding for a particular legislative or policy initiative, work in a specific area or in a specific way toward membership development and retention, chapter development and work, or even a specific statement of organization support for a position taken by the organization to highlight our work or goals.

According to our bylaws, the Maryland NOW State Conference is our highest governing body and action taken will mandate actions by the State’s Executive Committee and State Council.

Therefore, it is important to be sure that wording is clear and specific about these mandates so that the wishes of the members will be accomplished.

The Whereas Clauses:

The “Whereas” clauses are designed to outline the situation or problem, so there can be no mistake about the action or goal the body wishes be addressed. These clauses typically begin generally

“Whereas, Maryland NOW has always worked to support reproductive rights, and.”

The language then becomes more specific about what action is to be taken.

“Whereas, Governor Hogan’s recent statements, and action taken by Maryland Republicans demonstrates their unwillingness to make this problem a priority, and” “Whereas SB1234 would strengthen women’s rights to

The “Resolved” clauses outline the actual goals or actions requested by the resolution.

“Therefore, be it resolved that a Lobby Day be organized during the coming legislative session, in conjunction with other pro-choice groups to target legislators in opposition to this bill, and to call attention to the threat ...”

And/or

“Therefore, be it (finally) resolved that funding not to exceed \$200 from our legislative budget go toward expenses of either paying a pro-choice lobbyist or other costs associated with getting our members involved in this effort.”

Taking Action:

A resolution can be used by our leadership in a number of different ways. For example, it can call for a statement to be released by the organization as a formal position of Maryland NOW, or that funding be designated to develop a chapter in a specific place in order to effect work on a political campaign.

The reason for the separate “Whereas” clauses is in part to facilitate the group being able to edit and fine-tune the resolution or in the case of the “Therefore” clauses that the body be able to work on the wording of the solution the organization wishes to take.

“Whereas” and “Therefore” clauses can also contain statistical information or wording that Maryland NOW leaders can use in shaping organizational statements so it needs to be accurate and clear. Using inflammatory statements or making broad sweeping claims isn’t all that helpful.

Helpful hints:

Try to find Maryland NOW state and chapter leaders during the conference to learn any concerns or specific positions for action they may have to both encourage their involvement and facilitate discussion and more quickly address the resolution during the plenary session.

Consideration of the measure during the plenary will typically involve Robert’s Rules of Order for the discussion so understanding of the process will also help make sure members get the resolution they want!

Inclusion of Dollar Amounts

Also, keep in mind that the final decisions regarding expenditure of any specific amounts of money can only be made by the Maryland NOW State Council. Therefore, putting in a range of amounts, or the words “not to exceed” could be used to indicate a ceiling amount. If the writer(s) are unsure of what something might cost (for example, the fees for hiring a lobbyist for work on a specific bill) it’s a good idea to at least indicate deferment to the State Council in determining what can be spent. You might also indicate – for an event taking place during the next budget year – that the amount be set by the Budget Committee for inclusion in that year’s budget.

Compromise

The most successful resolutions require compromise. Someone may want stronger – or less adamant language, or there may be concern that the money called for be more or less that is originally mentioned. Keep in mind that in order to pass your resolution, you may need to hear other views in order to get broader support for your resolution.

Notes:
