



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Writing a CONA Proposal

The following information should help you plan your proposal. Included are rules and tips for selecting a topic, the format of a proposal, and a sample proposal.

Overview

Unlike a state bill, which is a piece of legislation, a CONA proposal is a short essay that describes a problem and suggests a solution. Your proposal will be discussed in a series of committees as the conference progresses. Proposals that are rated highly move on to larger committees while proposals that are poorly rated are no longer discussed. Only a handful of proposals will make it to the final Plenary Session to be discussed by the entire conference. Proposals are rated by your fellow committee members with the following criteria in mind: National/international importance, Evidence of author research, Feasibility, Preparation and presentation, Originality.

Topic Selection

When thinking about your CONA proposal make sure you have clearly identified a **problem** before you focus on a solution. You should do some research regarding the problem you have identified and determine what solutions have been proposed, tried, or implemented. Your research should help you define and structure your proposed solution.

A CONA proposal should discuss a problem of **national** or **international** scope. Issues that are of local or state scope are not appropriate. Topics that are by law or practice within state control are generally not good topics for CONA. Examples of state-oriented topics are: criminal law, education policies, state and local taxes, and so on. If you answer 'yes' to many or all of the following questions you probably should consider a different topic:

- Can your problem be successfully addressed at the local or state level?
- Can your solution be implemented without national or international resources?
- Is your problem localized to a particular geographic area?
- Does your problem affect a small number of people?
- Does your problem involve state statutes vs. federal law?

In general, an appropriate issue for a state Youth in Government bill will not be an appropriate issue for a CONA proposal.

Your proposal may deal with federal powers and legislation, Constitutional issues (including amendments), international treaties (withdrawal from a treaty, joining a treaty, or proposing new treaties). Other possibilities include changes to foreign policy, military doctrine, modifications to executive functions such as regulations or executive orders, changes to Congressional House and Senate rules, and proposals regarding international organizations (UN, NATO, etc.).

Your proposal should be understandable by your peers. You will be describing your problem and solution to other high school students. Try to select issues that can be

readily understood by non-experts and that can be easily explained in a short amount of time. Try to select topics that you know something about. Your knowledge will show through in debate and will lead to higher ratings in committee.

Think big. Large policy initiatives are often much more interesting than small policy refinements. Successful CONA proposals catch the attendee's interest and spark debate. Make sure you are proposing a specific, tangible, and defensible proposal for action and not simply announcing an abstract goal with no specific course of action to attain the goal.

Many CONA proposals recommend legislative action but the proposal itself doesn't need to be written in the form of legislation. Focus on the larger ideas rather than the specific implementation details.

Proposal Format

A CONA proposal must be written in a particular format. There are five parts to the proposal:

- Title
- Major Areas to be Affected
- Justification
- Proposal for Action
- Results to be Expected

Title: This should be a brief phrase or sentence that summarizes your proposal. Readers should understand what your proposal intends to do by reading the title.

Areas to be Affected: A list of entities that would be affected if your proposal was adopted. Entities are people, groups, or organizations: Department of Defense, all US citizens, illegal aliens, gun owners, business owners, high schools, state legislatures, parents, stem cell researchers, Latin America, and so on.

Justification: In this section you summarize the problem you have identified and explain why you think this is an important issue to be addressed at the national or international level. This section is usually one or two short paragraphs. It is only a summary of your reasoning not a detailed argument.

Proposal For Action: This is a one or two paragraph section that specifically describes what actions you are proposing to be taken that will address the problem you have identified. This section is not written in the form of legislation. Usually this section is a paragraph or two. You can also list your proposed actions in outline form. This is the major part of your proposal.

Results to be Expected: Here you summarize what the result of your proposal will be should it be implemented. Usually a few sentences is sufficient.

More Info

Sample Proposals and a writing guide can be found at www.ymcacona.org under the [Proposal Tab](#).