

How to write a resolution

Because the Resolutions adopted by your members represent a formal expression of the official opinion or will of the post, extreme care should be devoted to both their preparation and thoughtful content.

This article offers guidelines and suggestions relating primarily to the form of resolutions rather than to their content. However, remember that resolutions transmitted beyond your post and within the organization of the Legion must be "germane" - that is, closely related, to the purposes of The American Legion exists.

Resolutions requiring county, district, or department consideration must be prepared and forwarded in accordance with their respective regulations and bylaws.

Form is Important - A well written resolution stands a better chance of getting favorable consideration at your county, district, or department conventions than a resolution which is vaguely worded and carelessly formulated.

In some posts, the member who moves the adoption of a resolution must present it in writing at the time a motion is offered. Other posts follow the practice of assigning one member, or, special committee, the task of drafting or editing those resolutions that are to be sent forward for convention consideration. However, it remains the responsibility of the Post Commander to make sure that each resolution truly reflects the sense of the action taken by his post, and is presented in the best possible form.

General Guidelines - A resolution should contain "supporting arguments" and its intent should be clearly defined. It should be free of errors of fact and law. A resolution should have material relevance to the purposes and programs of the American Legion. A resolution should deal with only one subject.

Resolutions have two major parts, a preamble and resolving section. Each consists of one or more clauses, sometimes called paragraphs, and the whole is read in its entirety, beginning with the preamble, as one continuous, complete sentence. The preamble sets forth the reasons for the resolution; the resolving section sets forth the intent of the resolution.

Although it precedes the resolving section in appearance, the preamble of a resolution should be prepared after the resolving section has been put in final form. This procedural sequence is recommended because once the intent of a resolution has been clearly stated, it is much easier to decide what statements are needed in the preamble to make clear the reasons for the resolution.

The resolving section of a resolution begins with the word "Resolved" usually printed in capital letters and followed by a comma. Between this word and the statement of the resolution's intent, there should be inserted the following information: (1) identification of the resolving authority; (2) the circumstances and place of action, and (3) the date of the action. The first word after this information should be "That" with a capital "T" - example: "Resolved, by Post #___ The American Legion, Department of___, in regular (or special) meeting assembled in ___ (place and date), ___ That..."

This clause, referred to as the "resolving clause", comparable to the "enacting clause" of a law, should be uniform for every resolution.

The word "That" immediately following the resolving clause introduces the clause which is the object of the verb "resolved". It aids the reader to find the point at which the "meat" of the resolution commences; it aids the drafter of the resolution to launch a strong and unmistakable statement of intent. Examples: "Resolved, ... That The American Legion shall sponsor and support legislation to..." "Resolved, that the American Legion is opposed to the repeal or weakening of..."

Additional Resolving Clauses - Although each resolution should deal with only one subject, it is often necessary or desirable to attach additional clauses "paragraphs" to a resolution's resolving section in order to cover matters that are closely related to the main intent. This device is especially useful for spelling out the details of how and by whom the intent of the resolution is to be carried out or accomplished. Example: "Resolved", By (etc.)..., That...; and be it "Further Resolved, That...; and be it (add further resolved paragraphs as required); and be it "Finally Resolved, That..."

As shown here, the identifying information is stated only once in the first paragraph of the resolving section of a resolution, and is not repeated in the subsequent paragraphs. A period is used only once at the close of the last paragraph of the resolving section.

The preamble of a resolution is made up of one or more clauses "paragraphs", each of which begins with "Whereas." Two or more clauses are joined together by a semi-colon followed by "and". Example: "Whereas, The American Legion is an organization of war veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of their community, state, and nation; and "Whereas, This service is performed through The American Legion's basic programs; and (etc.)

Each clause in the preamble should contain a statement of act which is logically related to the intent of the resolution and explains and justifies the need for the resolution. Note that each clause would stand alone as a complete sentence if the "Whereas" were removed and a period were used in place of the semi-colon at the end.

The final clause of the preamble is joined to the resolving section by a semi-colon or colon, followed usually by the phrase "now, therefore be it..." (Acceptable variations in common usage are "therefore be it;" or simply, "be it"). Example: "Whereas, ...; and, "Whereas, .. ; and "Whereas, ...; now, therefore, be it "Resolved, ..., that..." Note: The "Whereas" may be set out in capital letters, italics, underscored, etc., depending on preference. When capitalized, it is usually followed by a comma, and the first letter of the following word is capitalized.

There is no formula for deciding how many "whereas" clauses a resolution should have. In general, the fewer the better provided that the reasons or reasons for the resolution are adequately stated.

Study the resolving section and get the exact purpose of the resolution firmly in mind. Then start writing down statements of fact which relate to this purpose. Organize them into a logical sequence, omitting the weak or unnecessary ones; put a "Whereas" in front of each and a semi-colon and appropriate connecting word or words at the end of each for joining them to the next section of the resolution. Do not use a period in the preamble.

Resolutions are important business to The American Legion. Write them with thought and care. Vote on each one with the realization that though your action you are helping to build, or tear down, the effectiveness and the reputation of your post, of your department, and of the entire American Legion.

THE AMERICAN LEGION, DEPARTMENT OF MICHIGAN

RESOLUTION NUMBER

SUBMITTED BY

SUBJECT

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS,

WHEREAS,

WHEREAS,

RESOLVED,

FURTHER RESOLVED,

FINALLY RESOLVED,

SAMPLE