

PASSING A LOCAL RESOLUTION

Why Engage in a Local Resolution Campaign

Passing a local resolution through your county commission, city council, township board, or other local elected officials is one action groups can take to move toward its organization's goals and objectives.

Before taking this action, members should discuss the purposes and role of passing the resolution and ensure this step will fit into the roadmap leading the organization to its goals.

There are a number of reasons a local group may want their local government to pass a resolution. The purposes may include but are not limited to 1) Raising public awareness about the issue; 2) Providing a show of support or leverage with other elected officials or organizations; 3) Developing a relationship with elected officials on the issue; and 4) Providing a means for members to get involved in making positive community change.

Develop a Local Resolution

The first step is to write or adopt a comprehensive, clearly stated resolution within the chapter or local group. It is vital that a group's members have input and ownership in the development of a resolution. By doing this, members will be able to speak confidently and intelligently about the resolution to the public and elected officials they are trying to influence.

Once the resolution has been ratified by your organization, develop a plan for its passage. This includes creating and gathering background materials members will need to explain the issue.

Identify the members of the board to approach. Identify the person who sets up the board's schedule and does their mailings and minutes. Set up a timeline that includes when and where the elected officials meet, when their meeting packets are mailed, and the deadline for requesting a slot on the agenda.

Resolution: A formal statement of opinion or determination adopted by an assembly or other group of persons.

Get on the Agenda

Many county and local boards cannot or will not make time for your presentation unless you are on the agenda. Once you have identified the board members and their administrative person, ask for an opportunity to give a presentation at an upcoming meeting. This is usually done through an administrative person who prepares the agenda and develops board mailings. Most county and city boards have a mailing or packet that goes out prior to each meeting. Include your information and resolution language in that mailing, and confirm the date and time you will present the information.

Contact your Local Officials

Ask members of your organization to volunteer to speak with each member of the council or board individually. Be prepared to explain the information they have/will receive in their mailing. Explain the purpose and importance of the resolution. Ask whether that board member supports the resolution. Members should be ready to answer any questions the individual board member may have or be able to gather the answers before the board meets.

Preparing for the Board Meeting

After your members meet individually with the elected officials, they should report to the group contact. This will help the group's spokesperson(s) prepare for their presentation at the meeting and ensure that as many questions as possible are answered before the meeting.

Ask supporters of the resolution to attend the meeting as a show of support. This should include a cross-section of your membership including both genders, farmers, ranchers and townspeople.

It is beneficial to meet at least an hour before the meeting to prepare. At that meeting, confirm the group's spokespersons and make sure the role of all attending is clear and well planned. This will also ensure that everyone is there on time.

At the meeting

Be on time. These boards have a full agenda. If you are not on time, they may move you to a later slot on the agenda or simply shorten your allotted time.

Your spokesperson should introduce supporters and allies. Clarify their attendance in support of the proposed resolution. He/she should give a concise presentation of the resolution and hand out any referenced information. Even if the information went out to the board in an earlier packet, this makes reference easier and saves time. Make additional copies and give them to other visitors and the press.

There may be opponents of the resolution at the meeting. Prepare in advance by anticipating questions, concerns and challenges that may occur. By following preparation steps of meeting with board members in advance, preparing with your allies and having materials of support available, you will be better equipped to address resistance.

The spokesperson should specifically say that your group is asking the board to adopt this resolution. Give the board members an opportunity to ask questions. The more informed the board feels, the more likely they are to feel positively about the issue.

The board is likely to take some kind of action on the resolution. Whatever the outcome, your work with that board is just beginning. If they vote to adopt the resolution, your next step is to get copies of the minutes stating adoption. Following the meeting, you may want to publicize decisions in the media through a press release or by visiting with the reporters that have covered the meeting. Your group will also need to develop a plan for keeping the elected officials updated on the issue and its developments. Your group should evaluate and keep a record of the plan so that it can be used as a model for other boards.

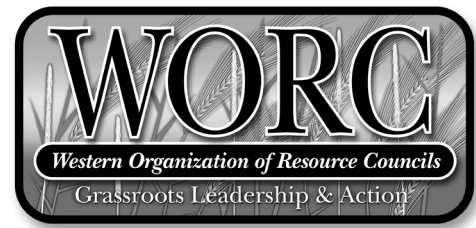
If the board votes against adopting the resolution, supporters will need to evaluate the process and determine what changes need to be made. Options may include educating the elected officials further, building stronger public pressure, and rewording the resolution to reintroduce at a later date.

The board may decide to take the resolution under advisement. If this is the case, ask them what additional information you can provide and make plans to be at the meeting where they will make a final decision.

Continue to discuss the issue with the elected officials and build their confidence in the resolution's importance.

An enthusiastic board may even take your resolution one step further by proposing additional action or bypassing the resolution for an alternative solution. Being clear about your long term goals for the issue will help you to determine the best course of action to meet your long term goals.

Regardless of the outcome of the meeting, thank the board for the opportunity to meet with them and assure them that you will continue to work with them on this and other pertinent issues.



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