



# MINNESOTA YMCA YOUTH IN GOVERNMENT NATIONAL ISSUES FORUM PROPOSAL WRITING HANDBOOK

Rev 10/18

## OVERVIEW

The National Issues Forum (NIF) provides delegates with the opportunity to research, write and advocate for a proposal of their choosing, with a focus on high-level debate – a unique experience in the Minnesota Youth in Government program. The National Issues Forum provides a complement to the Model Assembly program by extending the focus of the issues debated by participants beyond the borders of Minnesota.

This handbook is designed to provide delegates and advisors with information on the National Issues Forum program and to describe a delegate's responsibilities.

For rules and guidelines pertaining to the National Issues Forum procedures and debate, please see the National Issues Forum Rule Book.

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## I. WRITING AND PRESENTING YOUR PROPOSAL

Unlike the legislative houses, the NIF has every delegate prepare and present on their own proposal. Below are the important details about the four parts of how to write and present your proposal.

### PART 1: TOPIC SELECTION

Worst ways to think of proposal topics:

Why are these worst? Because nearly all of them will make an audience more likely to move on to other proposals, at the expense of yours. You will need to make people care about your topic enough to listen to why you want to talk about

- Unique problem --> unique solution                      Why? -->can be hard to understand
- Important problem --> common solution                  Why? -->others may also do this
- Common problem --> common solution                  Why? -->skip for more exciting

Best way to think of a proposal topic:

- Start with a common problem --> propose a unique solution  
Take a "sharp turn" on the way to the unique solution to increase interest

### PART 2: TOPIC DEVELOPMENT & RESEARCH

You should have some level of passion about the topic when you select it. This can be because you genuinely care about the outcome of the topic, or because you think it is so important that it must be discussed – even if you hate the possible outcome. Love the outcome or loathe the outcome – they are the same. Feeling ambivalent about the outcome is dangerous. It will affect your thinking and the depth you go to in your research.

Spend some quality time in research. Know what you are saying and all the possible outcomes. Talk to your teachers, librarians, your Youth in Government advisors, your peers. Research and input (thinking through the angles) will help you a lot. You need to be excited and confident about your proposal to be successful and to give it the most exposure at the conference.

There are many research resources available to you via the internet, your school library, teachers, or local library. Many delegates begin their proposal writing process by reading current periodicals (such as *Newsweek* or *US News & World Report*) or newspapers (*LA Times*, *New York Times*, *Washington Post*) in order to get ideas of current national and international issues.



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## **PART 3: PROPOSAL FORMATTING**

Writing a National Issues Forum Proposal should be simple if you have done your research. Proposals are no more than one page (typed) and consist of four sections. The proposal format is designed to allow for creativity and persuasive argumentation. Proposals are a written idea, not rigid legislation.

Every proposal has four sections. The four sections include: Title, Major Areas to be Affected, Justification, and Proposal for Action. All proposals must follow this format and be approved by delegation directors before submission.

### **Title or Purpose:**

#### ***WRITE THIS SECTION LAST***

Briefly state the basic action of your proposal. This should be one clear sentence (maybe two), telling what your proposal will do.

### **Proposal for Action:**

#### ***WRITE THIS SECTION FIRST***

This is where you state the “nuts and bolts” of your proposal. What are the details – what people/institutions will take specific action on your topic. This is also the place where you list out what those specific actions are. Remember you are not writing legislation but a broad proposal intended to be debated – focus is on the *topic*, not the details. One or two well-constructed paragraphs will do.

### **Major Areas to be Affected:**

#### ***WRITE THIS SECTION SECOND***

Tell what people, places or institutions your proposal will affect. This should be brief – a few words to one sentence. Don’t go into how these areas will be affected, just tell which areas.

### **Justification:**

#### ***WRITE THIS SECTION THIRD***

In paragraph form, tell why there is a need for your proposal. Include information that will make a compelling case for your issue – statistics, quotes, etc., but *don’t* *overdo it*. You only want to provide the basics of your justification – the bulk of your research will come out in your oral presentation and in debate. You can provide your justification in one or two short paragraphs, but remember that *less is more*. The points you make in the Justification section should be your most brilliant and best-reasoned illustrations.



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## PART 4: PRESENTING YOUR PROPOSAL

In the National Issues Forum, every author presents their proposal and has the opportunity to comment on other proposals throughout the conference. You will be offered training on how to present your proposal, however some key details are listed below.

- Delegates will have 2 minutes during the first committee to present their opening introduction speech to the committee.
- Your 2 minutes are for supporting your proposal and presenting additional evidence. Do not restate or read your written proposal. Delegates may write and read their opening introduction.
- You will have the opportunity to yield a portion of your presentation time to debatable/substantive questions. There is also a scheduled 2-minute question period for non-debatable, technical questions only.
- You will be allowed a 2-minute summation.

## II. RANKING PROCEDURES AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

As part of the proposal advancement process, every proposal is ranked after it is heard in forum. There are five criteria where proposals are ranked from best to worst on a scale of 1 to 4 (1= best score in category, 4= worst score in category). It is to your benefit to consider the ranking criteria when preparing your proposal. All proposals are evaluated and ranked based upon the following criteria:

**Evidence of Research** - Is there research cited? Is it evident that the author has the facts to support the proposal and gives a well-prepared presentation? The ideal presentation would be both informative and well supported.

**Debatability** - Is there ample room for argumentation on the proposal? Does it spark emotional or logistical debate? Ideally proposals will encourage intense and energetic debate on both sides of the issue presented.

**Feasibility** - Did the proposal author describe a practical way of enforcing or implementing the action to be taken? The ideal presentation will detail methods for implementing the suggested policy changes.

**National/International Relevance** - Is the issue of national or international importance? Determining the relevance of a particular issue is subjective. This criterion is partially intended to downgrade proposals that are not national or international in scope (i.e. issues that are purely local or state).

**Creativity** - Does this proposal present a new or creative way of looking at an issue? The ideal proposal will be both creative and practical in the way in that they address the issue at hand.



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## III. Timeline for Your Proposal

In order to participate in the National Issues Forum you must have a proposal.

- **Proposals must be submitted online by deadline to the YIG State Office via REGY.**
  - **The deadline is \_\_\_\_\_.**
- All proposals must be submitted in the correct format and include your name (as author) and delegation.

### ADDITIONAL POINTS TO REMEMBER WHEN WRITING YOUR PROPOSAL

- Don't use words that avoid commitment (ex., use "will" rather than "would", "could" or "might")
- Don't use the first person (ex., refer to "the nation" rather than "our nation")
- Your proposal cannot exceed two pages (conference requirement) but really shouldn't be longer than ONE PAGE, for clarity and conciseness
- When considering a topic, keep three things in mind – (1) national or international importance, (2) debatability and (3) "cutting edgeness" of topic.
- The National Issues Forum is debate-oriented, so you should write your proposal with that in mind. You may have a fantastic policy idea, but if it is universally acceptable, it will be passed over in favor of proposals that will have good discussion. In this sense, *proposals* are much different than *bills*.
- Your proposal should serve as discussion about issues rather than a statement of policy.



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## IV. SAMPLE IDEAS FOR PROPOSAL TOPICS (DELEGATES CAN AND SHOULD CHOOSE TOPICS NOT ON THIS LIST)

1. America's participation in trade agreements
2. America's participation in the World Trade Organization
3. Banning tobacco products (cultivation, manufacturing, sale, import/export of)
4. Campaign finance reform
5. Chemical castration for child offenders
6. Creating a carbon tax
7. Criminalizing abortion
8. Cuban-American relations
9. Drafting U.S. prison inmates to serve in the U.S. Military
10. Debt ceiling regulation
11. Equal Rights Amendment
12. Federal funding for Welfare
13. Federal funding of mass transportation and highway construction
14. Female registration with the U.S. Selective Service
15. Free trade of pharmaceutical products/prescription drugs
16. Fighting terrorism and terroristic threats
17. Funding for prevention and rehabilitation programs for underage drinkers
18. Addressing climate change
19. The Kyoto Protocol
20. Grace period for adoption
21. Hate Crime legislation
22. Indecency fines levied by the FCC on broadcast television
23. Israeli/Palestinian peace talks and foreign relations
24. Mandatory minimum sentences
25. No Child Left Behind Act
26. Oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge
27. Option of parole for federal crimes/offenses
28. Organ transplants for incarcerated federal, state, and county prisoners
29. Pharmacist distribution of medicine prescribed by a medical doctor
30. Presidential power to call for a referendum
31. Presumed consent for organ donation
32. Affirmative Action in college Admissions
33. Artificial Insemination database
34. Deportation of illegal aliens
35. Direct election of the President/Abolish Electoral College
36. Domestic spying prohibition without warrant/Domestic Surveillance
37. Tax release requirements for public officials
38. Election Day voter registration
39. English proficiency exams for non-English speaking legalized immigrants in grades K-12
40. Ethanol production and utilization
41. Flag defamation
42. Funding for high schools based on dropout rates
43. High school graduation requirements
44. HIV testing in high schools
45. Required service in the military
46. Immigration policies and reform
47. Mandatory voting/7-Day voting period
48. National Port security
49. Observance of race and gender-based history months
50. Parent/Guardian presence required for interrogation of mentally disabled
51. Cybersecurity methods and technology
52. Piracy, on water
53. Printing pertinent identifying numbers on insurance cards
54. Recognize Hamas and the Palestinian Government
55. Refugee treatment and resettlement policies
56. Renewable energy technology and funding
57. Rights of American forces detainees
58. Setting a protocol for Federal School Funding based on student performance
59. Solvency of Social Security
60. Stem Cell Research
61. Trigger Locks on firearms
62. U.S. Humanitarian Aid to African nations
63. U.S. Nuclear Arsenal Disarmament/Nuclear non-proliferation treaty
64. United Nations as primary agent for war on terrorism
65. Voting rights, disenfranchisement



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## MINNESOTA YMCA YOUTH IN GOVERNMENT NATIONAL ISSUES FORUM PROPOSAL

**SAMPLE**

**PROPOSAL #:** 100  
**AUTHOR:** John Doe  
**DELEGATION:** International Falls YMCA

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### **TITLE:**

To move the capital of the United States of America from Washington, District of Columbia, to St. Paul, Minnesota

### **MAJOR AREAS TO BE AFFECTED:**

US Federal government, Minnesota state government, federal government staff and employees, state and local infrastructure, US citizens, and citizens living in the united states

### **JUSTIFICATION:**

The United States Capital is the center of the country. Washington, D.C. is nowhere near the center of the United States and is prone to extreme weather catastrophes. Although the likelihood tropical storms directly impacting Washington, D.C. is relatively low, it is even lower in Minnesota because of its geographical location. Minnesota is also a tectonically inactive state and the likelihood of an earthquake taking place is extremely low. According to U.S. News and World Reports, Minnesota is ranked 20th for best overall economic stability, 7th for best overall healthcare, 13th for best public education, and 2nd for best quality of life. Moving the capital of the united states to Minnesota would mean that the center of the nation is one of the best states, based on statistics. The D.C. population as of 2017 is 693,972. The American Community Survey estimates that the population density as of 2013 is 10,528 people per square mile, whereas in Minnesota, the population density is about 68 people per square mile. With a large population density, limited space, and rising housing costs, it does not make sense to have the capital of the United States of America to be in Washington, D.C.

### **PROPOSAL FOR ACTION**

Create a third city in Minnesota near the Twin Cities to be the capital of the United States, creating the triple cities, if you will. There will be a general election to name this new city. All working government officials and agencies will be stationed in the new capital. All federal government buildings will be rebuilt in the new capital. The current federal government buildings in Washington DC will instead be converted into local government buildings. The new capital city will abide by Minnesota state laws. All historic landmarks and historic sites will remain in their current locations. Washington DC will remain as a separate district and will not join any its neighboring states.



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## MINNESOTA YMCA YOUTH IN GOVERNMENT NATIONAL ISSUES FORUM PROPOSAL

**SAMPLE**

**PROPOSAL #:** 101  
**AUTHOR:** Tony the Tiger  
**DELEGATION:** Sugarland

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**TITLE:**

To abolish the use of animals as political party mascots in the United States.

**MAJOR AREAS TO BE AFFECTED:**

The Republican and Democrat parties and all their State-run counterparts, The Modern Whig Party, the Prohibition Party, any other national or state political party that uses an animal mascot, and party members of these various organizations.

**JUSTIFICATION:**

In 2008, the Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul, Minnesota was host to the largest political party convention in United States history, the Republican National Convention. That same year, Denver Colorado hosted another large political gathering, the Democratic National Convention. These events were attended by hundreds of thousands of people, who used countless number of flyers, stickers and various other decorations and materials that used depictions of defenseless animals. When these events ended, thousands of injured and neglected animals were recovered from the floors of the stadiums.

These animals, such as the "Republican Elephant" and the "Democrat Donkey" are often stacked in piles waist high, until they can be distributed to party members at various events and meetings. They are put on stickers and banners, often hung at dangerous heights for extended periods. In addition, other less regulated national political parties, like the Modern Whig Party, that uses an Owl mascot, and the Prohibition Party, that uses a Camel – may be using these animals in other ways that are adverse to the health of the animal. Elephants and Donkeys deserve the same humane and ethical treatment that a human mascot would, whether they be in print form or in other forms of media.

**PROPOSAL FOR ACTION:**

Animals in the United States that are used as political party mascots shall immediately be given ethical and humane treatment by their users. These animals will be allowed frequent and fulfilling periods of relaxation to reduce stress and ensure longevity. Any noncompliance or continued abuse will be illegal.

Political parties will immediately begin a gradual decline in the frequency of use of animal logos. Any use of animals as political party mascots in the United States will become illegal following the next federal election.