



Washington State House of Representatives

Tips for HRC Staff

Drafting House Floor Resolutions

What is a “resolution”?

- This training covers “House resolutions,” also called “floor resolutions,” “simple resolutions,” or just, “resolutions”*
- Resolutions are adopted by the House to formally recognize or congratulate an individual, group, organization or commemorate a holiday, “day of,” or other cause or event
- *There are other types of House resolutions/House and Senate concurrent resolutions used to adopt House rules, House and Senate joint rules, other administrative matters or policies and session deadlines

Samples of resolutions --

- A resolution **honoring an individual or group** who has made contributions to the state or locality, particularly upon a milestone, such as an individual's retirement or death
- A resolution honoring **an individual or group achievement**, such as acknowledging a high school baseball championship team, contributions to a community by a local charity or group
- A resolution **acknowledging or commemorating a holiday or a "day of,"** which has been previously established by federal or state law or by a national or state group
- More recent trend in the House: **acknowledging a cause or a plight**, such as crime victims, individuals struggling with particular diseases, societal problems

Resolution format and printing --

- Samples may be found on HRC Central/LA Resources/Resolutions
- Resolution should be sufficiently brief and printed in readable (**not miniscule!**) font, to allow it to fit on one page of the House's special commemorative paper. This allows it to be "frameable" - size is 8.5 x 11.
- Each sponsor is provided two copies (more upon request)
- Adopted resolutions are recorded in the House Journal according to their date of adoption under "Floor Resolutions"

What a House resolution is not

- A resolution may not address **policy**; policy may only be adopted through a **bill**
 - Resolution may not “adopt”, promote, or express preference for state law, policies, rules, or requirements
 - Resolution may not refer to or promote pending legislation
 - Resolutions should not include expressions, opinions, positions, preferences or recommendations for policy (e.g., Washington “should,” “must,” “shall”).
 - Resolutions **may** acknowledge a previously established holiday or “day of,” but may not adopt a new holiday or “day of” (vehicle for adopting new day/holiday is a bill).
 - Resolutions may not send messages or requests to the President, Congress or another branch of government (the vehicle for this is called a “joint memorial”).

What a resolution is not, cont'd

- Resolutions should not address subjects which are controversial; topics typically are expected to be non-partisan or enjoy some degree of bipartisan support
- Resolutions should not politicize the subject matter
- Resolutions should not promote private businesses or entities (avoid improper use of state resources)
- Resolutions should contain a Washington state legislative nexus (for example, should not address U.S. foreign policy)

Some further caveats:

- In some cases, a resolution may fail to comply with House Resolution Guidelines because the individual or group honored is too closely aligned with policy or support in the form of a resolution may blur ethical lines
 - For example, some advocacy groups like Planned Parenthood or the NRA are so closely aligned with strong policy positions among various members that resolutions honoring such groups may stray into, or give the appearance of straying into weighing in on policy
 - Alternatively, in some cases, honoring individuals or groups closely aligned with policy, lobbying or fundraising through resolutions may raise legislative ethical issues, such as improper use of state resources or conveying special privileges

Sample do's and don'ts:

- Resolution addressing “Down Syndrome Day”

Fails to comply with House Resolution guidelines	Complies with House Resolution guidelines
<p>“NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives establishes March 21 as Washington State Down Syndrome Day...”</p> <p><u>Why it fails:</u> A House Resolution may not adopt new days; but it can acknowledge or commemorate already established days.</p>	<p>“NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives celebrates March 21, as World Down Syndrome Day, as established by the United Nations.”</p> <p>- The body of the resolution could highlight state individuals and/or groups making contributions to the well-being, education and development of persons with Down Syndrome in Washington state and commemorate any already-established “day”.</p>

Resolution do's and don'ts:

- Resolution addressing current event – War in Ukraine

Fails to comply with House Resolution guidelines	Complies with House Resolution guidelines
<p>“NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives condemns the unprovoked, illegal and immoral invasion of Ukraine...”</p> <p><u>Why it fails:</u> Lacks Washington State legislative nexus; House Members may have strong feelings about world events, but have no authority over U.S. foreign policy</p>	<p>“NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives recognizes the contributions and sacrifices made by individual emigrating from Ukraine to the State of Washington and those individuals and groups serving them...”</p> <p>- The body of the resolution could highlight the contributions to the state and localities of individuals who have emigrated from Ukraine to Washington and those groups serving such immigrants. It could reference immigrants who emigrated due to the conflict in Ukraine, but not directly address or seek to impose foreign policy or statements on foreign policy.</p>

Resolution do's and don'ts:

- Resolution addressing emergency response – Oso Mudslide

Fails to comply with House Resolution guidelines	Complies with House Resolution guidelines
<p>“NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives directs that the state’s emergency response to disasters such as the Oso Mudslide should be led by local elected and other community leaders...”</p> <p><u>Why it fails:</u> Resolutions may not impose policy requirements or express policy preferences. Policy requirements may only adopted through a bill.</p>	<p>“NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives recognizes and honors the collaborative emergency response to the Oso Mudslide led by local elected officials, groups and individuals which, along with other state and federal responders, was effective and responsive to the needs of those impacted by the disaster...”</p> <p>- The emphasis of the resolution should focus on recognizing those involved in directing the successful emergency response. In this way, the resolution can indirectly highlight the successful policy adopted by those responders, but it complies with resolution guidelines because it does not impose or recommend any type of mandatory policy for Washington.</p>

Process for drafting

- LAs typically prepare the first draft of resolutions
 - Be familiar with guidelines, appropriate subjects for, and how to draft resolutions
 - Remember – NO POLICY (policy must be in bills)
 - Consult with Patty on questions in advance – particular if you have a specific date for adoption
 - Research and/or verify the facts about the individual or group, history, accomplishments, awards, etc.
 - Often, a family, local institution or group may provide you with background facts, history, etc., but it is a good idea to conduct some independent research, such as to confirm dates of events, spelling of names and places, etc.

Process for drafting

- Look at samples for format, drafting style, ways to avoid policy, language to “recognize” (but not adopt) holidays or events
- Once the draft is complete, the LA may wish to seek input/suggested edits from the member’s PIO, if time and the PIO’s schedule permit
- Provide final draft to member for review and approval

Next steps: submit to Chief Clerk's Office

- Preferred method - coordination by Chief Clerk's Office
 - E-mail the final draft to Patty Moore in the Chief Clerk's office
 - If the resolution is needed by a certain date, **provide the draft to Patty at least one week in advance**, and specifically **alert her to the preferred adoption date**
 - Patty and counsel for the two caucuses will review; may have suggested edits
 - Final will be sent by Patty to the Code Reviser who will finalize it and assign a resolution number
 - Signatures may be gathered by pink slip

Processing through Code Reviser's office

- If member directs LA to work directly with Code Reviser's office, please let Patty know
 - Patty and counsel still must review the draft in advance to confirm compliance with House guidelines and may require edits
 - Patty will still monitor resolution's adoption and should be advised in advance of any requested adoption dates or deadlines

Process for adoption - House Rules

- House Rule (Rule 10(F), 2022):
 - **(F) HOUSE RESOLUTIONS.** House resolutions **shall be filed with the chief clerk** who **shall transmit them to the rules committee**. If a rules committee meeting is not scheduled to occur prior to a time necessitated by the purpose of a house resolution, the majority leader and minority leader by agreement may waive transmission to the rules committee to **permit consideration of the resolution by the house [pro forma or from the rostrum]**. The rules committee may adopt house resolutions by a sixty percent majority vote of its entire membership or may, by a majority vote of its members, place them on the motions calendar for consideration by the house. **House resolutions are not subject to debate**, except for resolutions necessary for the operation of the house, and resolutions commemorating Children's Day, Day of Remembrance, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, National Guard Day, and President's Day.

Process for adoption, cont'd

- Resolutions are adopted in the Rules Committee (60% vote), in pro forma, or “from the rostrum” in floor session
 - Patty coordinates with the Speaker’s counsel to monitor the adoption schedule for resolutions
- Generally, members may not speak to or debate floor resolutions. House Rules permit debate only on very specific resolutions, such as one celebrating Martin Luther King Day.
- That being said, if the individual or group being honored will be present in the House Gallery during floor session, please let Patty know **in advance**. The **Speaker** may acknowledge the individual or group from the rostrum.
 - Note: remember that resolutions must have sufficient support in the House to be adopted; if the resolution does not comply with guidelines and/or has insufficient support, it may not be adopted

Resources:

- Questions: consult with Patty, the Speaker's Counsel or Minority Leadership Counsel
- Sample resolutions – HRC Central/LA Resources/Resolutions