

HOW TO WRITE A RESOLUTION

Guidelines for the Diocesan Convention of Northern Indiana

Use of a Preamble (the “Whereas” Clause)

Robert’s Rules of Order suggests that:

It is usually inadvisable to attempt to include reasons for a motion...within the motion itself...In general, the use of a preamble should be limited to cases where it provides little-known information...or where unusual importance is attached to make certain reasons for an action a matter of record.

Reasons for resolutions and the purposes, intentions and justifications for them are best included in a reasoned and thorough Explanation following the resolution. This provides some legislative history for future interpretation. Further, it is clear that a vote is being taken only on the substance of the resolution, *i.e.*, that which follows the word “Resolved.” Experience teaches that the use of “Whereas” clauses often leads to unnecessary and time consuming debate on and even attempts at amendments to the preamble clauses, which of itself is of no debate on and even attempts at amendments to the preamble clauses, which of itself is to no legislative effect, sometimes causing the legislation to be lost and always with delay to the Convention.

The Form of a Resolution

Title: Each resolution should bear a brief descriptive title so as to highlight the area of legislation, *e.g.*, “Amend Canon 9” or “Endorse the Indiana Episcopal/Lutheran Dialogue.”

The Preamble: If the proposer is convinced that there absolutely must be a preamble, each clause, written as a separate paragraph, begins with the word “Whereas”, underlined or printed in italics and followed by a comma. The preamble should never contain a period. Each of its paragraphs should close with a semicolon followed by the word “and”.

The Form of a Resolution: The word “Resolved” is underlined or printed in italics and is followed by a comma and the word “That”, which begins with a capital “T”. Each resolving paragraph should close with a semicolon (followed by the “and”) or a period. A resolving paragraph should not contain a period within its structure.

In a resolution containing several resolving paragraphs, each paragraph is separated by “therefore be it” and “be it further” phrases that end a clause. These phrases are not to be used at the beginning of a “Resolved” clause.

A Resolution Must Require Specific Action: The resolution should be phrases so that it will result in some action by the Convention or by some specified committee, commission, person, or agent

Amendment of Canon: References to the Canons should be set out as the word “Canon” followed by the designation of the Title, the Canon, the section and the Clause in each case separated by a period, *e.g.*, “Canon 6.2.a.”

If a Canon or Section of a Canon or Clause of a Section of a Canon is to be amended or added, the enactment should be in substantially one of the following forms:

Canon...is hereby amended to read as follows: (here insert the new reading, which should show matter to be deleted by a ~~striketrough~~ and new matter as underlined);

or

Canon...is hereby amended by adding a new Section (or Clause), reading as follows: (here insert the text of the new Section or Clause).

When amending a lengthy section of a Canon the proposer should reproduce as much of the Section as will permit a clear understanding of not only what is proposed but also what the companion subject matter may be and how it may be affected. More text rather than less text is often desirable to as to guide those legislating and to avoid time consuming questions for clarification.

Explanation: An accompanying explanation is highly desirable as it provides guidance to the Convention as to what is intended and upon what the resolution is based. Detailed references in the body of an explanation provide guidance to both those legislating and to those who must interpret the action in the future. For example, a resolution to amend a Canon to clarify an internal conflict or inconsistency will benefit from an explanation that contains specific references by canonical citation with page numbers; a resolution that reaffirms some prior action of Convention will be clarified by an explanation that cites pages of the Journal where the action was adopted.

SAMPLE RESOLUTION

Resolved, That (some person or agency, *e.g.*, the Commission on Ministry, do something, act upon something, or ask someone else to do something); and be it further

Resolved, That this action be communicated (or whatever else is needed to be accomplished).

EXPLANATION

This matter has been brought before the Convention and was acted upon in 1988 and 1991. (See pages ** of the Journal of the Convention for those years.) However, due to important changes that have taken place since then, it is requested that the previous action be reconsidered at this convention.