

CONA: PRESENTING YOUR PROPOSAL



You have written your proposal and are now ready to present it at CONA. It is important to remember that proposals are not voted on like legislative bills, but rather are evaluated by your fellow delegates based on the following criteria:

- National/International Importance
- Evidence of Research
- Feasibility
- Preparation and Presentation
- Debatable
- Originality

Any proposal can make its way through the process at CONA if it is based on a good idea, supported by research, creates debate in committee, presented with conviction, and carried by a strong network of support. The quality of each of these components rests on you, the individual, and thus depend heavily on your efforts.

You are not working alone and the efforts of those around you are equally important. Individuals shape the work of the committees by taking part in the whole process. Good delegates focus on the examination of each proposal brought before them just as much as they concentrate on their own proposal. You can make a difference in CONA by getting involved, which will enhance your own experience as well as the experiences of those around you.

Behind the Scenes

You need to be prepared to discuss your proposal with anyone who may play a role in moving it forward.

1. Know your proposal's strengths and be prepared to address criticisms.
2. Network with other delegates to build support for your proposal.
3. Seek opportunities to combine your proposal with another proposal where appropriate. However, do not feel pressured to combine with another proposal if you feel that it will take away from the true focus of your idea.
4. Take interest in other proposals. Just as you want other delegates to show interest in your proposal and debate it in committee, you need to do the same.
5. Within your committee, find delegates to speak for and against your proposal, helping to generate true debate on your idea.

Decorum

Keep in mind that although the quality of your proposal is what delegates are judging, they are also evaluating your attitude and character as well. Proper decorum is important to a successful proposal.

1. Review the CONA Handbook before arriving at CONA. Understand the rules and procedures as best you can. Do not be afraid to ask questions of students leaders or adult advisors if you need clarification.
2. Utilize proper parliamentary procedure in debate. Your committee chairpersons should assist you with this throughout the committee hearings.
3. You will be given a placard with your name and state on it. Be sure to always have this with you during debate when needed, and use proper etiquette when holding it up to be called upon to speak.
4. Show respect to other delegates, both in the committees and during breaks. Your behavior outside committee hearings can be a deciding factor for another delegate choosing to or not to support your proposal.
5. Engage in debate during committee hearings, but be respectful and ask good questions. Do not ask questions to make another delegate look foolish.
6. If you speak, have something meaningful to say. Do not speak just because you like to hear yourself talk. Speak because you have something important to add to the debate.
7. Adhere to the dress code for each day. A professional appearance can go a long way to your proposal being taken more seriously.
8. Respect the student leaders (committee chairpersons and presiding officers) and the adult advisors. These people are here to assist and guide you.
9. Have fun and enjoy the experience!

Presenting Your Proposal

Simply knowing your topic well is not enough. You must organize your ideas into an effective presentation and practice delivering it until you can explain your ideas in a convincing and timely way without having to read your speech.

1. Prepare your opening remarks and have notes. Nothing looks worse than a delegate who has nothing substantive to say during the opening remarks because s/he did not prepare for this.
2. Discuss the importance of the issue and why it matters to our country.
3. Be sure to cover the main points of your proposal in your speech, but do not just read your proposal to the committee.
4. Identify the problem addressed by your proposal, including the causes of the problem if appropriate and necessary.
5. Explain why the solution you offer is a good way to address the problem.
6. Practice, practice, practice. We will have a long bus ride to CONA, so use this time to review your speech, or write it if necessary.
7. Be prepared to answer questions from other delegates. You may consider providing answers to anticipated questions in your speech.
8. In response to questions, do not lie or make up statistics if you do not have them. Use these opportunities to expand on key points of your proposal, but it is important to not get caught telling the truth.
9. Prepare a short summary of the main points to be used as closing summation, leaving room to address questions brought up during debate.
10. When giving your closing summation, it is helpful to address points made during the debate, to show that you are in fact listening to other delegates' ideas and taking them into consideration.

1st Committee

The first time you formally present your proposal is in 1st Committee. The committee will debate each members' proposal in that committee. Approximately one-half of the proposals will move on to 2nd Committee.

1. Give your opening speech, as practiced on the way to CONA.
2. Do not be nervous. These are fellow students interested in the policies of our government, just like you.
3. Speak at an appropriate volume. Some rooms may have loud air conditioners or fans running, so be sure your voice can be heard by everyone in the room.
4. Follow the proper decorum and ask for clarification from the chairperson if you have a question about this prior to your presentation.
5. Other delegates in the committee will be watching you. Remember that facial expressions and body language can influence how your proposal is ranked by your fellow delegates.
6. Show interest in questions being asked of you, do not make other delegates' ideas seem inferior to your ideas through your expressions.
7. Take notes during the debate. It will be helpful to you when referencing questions or opposing points of view during your closing summation.

2nd Committee, 3rd Committee, General Assembly, and Plenary Sessions

The committee process can begin to move quickly, with the size of the committee becoming larger as 1st Committees are combined to make a 2nd Committee, and so on.

1. The proposal presentation process remains pretty similar throughout the committee hearings, with some changes in time allotted for speeches and debate. Familiarize yourself with these changes as CONA progresses.
2. Continue to work behind the scenes for your proposal and possibly other proposals that you feel passionately about.
3. If your proposal does move forward, review your opening and closing remarks after each committee hearing. Make modifications based on the debate and feedback.
4. As your proposal progresses, the probability of it moving forward is often based on how debatable it is and the strength of your closing remarks.
5. Relax and enjoy yourself. CONA is intended to be a open and educational environment, with delegates engaged in passionate and respectful debate. Be sure to have fun!