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Writing Strong Legislative Proposals

“Whenever we can make 25 words do the work of 50 we halve the area in which looseness and disorganization can flourish” Wilson Follett

“The most valuable of all talents is that of never using two words when one will do” Thomas Jefferson

“My goal is to make things as simple as possible but not simpler than that” Albert Einstein

“The language of law must not be foreign to those who must obey it” Learned Hand

Principles for Writing Strong Legislative Proposals

- Be collaborative and constructive, not combative and destructive.
- Don't engage in rhetoric – stick to the documented facts.
- Be clear and concise.
- Remember, laws solve or prevent problems by implementing policies so make sure you don't simply have a solution in search of a problem.
- Analyze the problem, facts, and existing law -- determine the policy to be drafted and the law to be addressed.
- Identify what circumstances are causing the problem.
- Identify who is responsible for the problem (institution, target group etc.).
- Identify who is affected by the problem.
- Consider who the "audience" of your legislation will be.
- Define your audience and broaden your measure's appeal.
- Seek practical solutions whenever possible.
- Ensure you are achieving the intended legal effect.
- Consult with legal experts.
- Pick the right legislator to author your proposal (Example: a Senator with a strong environmental record to carry legislation altering the Endangered Species Act)
- Bring your proposal to legislators during their legislative recess when they and staff are researching proposals for the coming Legislative Session (waiting for the Legislative Session to start before pitching proposals is often too late. Legislators have already spent months putting together their legislative packages).

