



NATIONAL ISSUES  
COMMISSION

*California Youth & Government*

Proposal  
Writing  
Handbook



# NIC Proposal Writing Handbook

The National Issues Commission (NIC) provides delegates with the opportunity to research, write and advocate for a proposal of their choosing – a unique experience in the Youth & Government ML/C program.

This handbook is designed to provide delegates and advisors with information on the NIC program and to describe a delegate’s responsibilities as a commissioner. It includes:

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**NOTE: Your advisor-approved proposal is due upon ARRIVAL at T&E II.**

### *Addendums:*

- #1 *Where to Research Your Proposal*
- #2 *Where to Develop Your Proposal*
- #3 *Sample Proposals*

As a staff, we are committed to making your Y&G experience as enjoyable and informative as possible.  
We look forward to working with you.

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## I. Overview of the NIC Program

The National Issues Commission (NIC) is a unique program that offers opportunities for junior and senior delegates (commissioners) to debate and research issues of national and/or international importance.

### Commissioner Role Description

As a commissioner you are responsible for:

- Independently identifying and researching an issue of national or international importance.
- Writing a one-page proposal on the topic of your choice.
- Preparing and delivering a two-minute speech in favor of your proposal at your commission hearing and subsequent rounds (should you advance).
- Participating in the debate and discussion of fellow commissioners' proposals.

### Road-Test Your Proposal at T&E II

In order to prepare commissioners for Sacramento, the NIC organizes an intense and informative set of training sessions at T&E II. These sessions are designed to be an opportunity for you to “Road-Test” your proposal concept and prepare your presentation. At T&E II you will be able to attend various workshops intended to:

- Prepare you to be a persuasive public speaker by enhancing your debate skills.
- Practice commission procedures (a relaxed form of parliamentary procedure).
- Teach you how to support and defend your proposal by using the library and the Internet as research tools.
- Test your proposal in a small group of fellow commissioners in order to gather valuable feedback on your proposals argument.
- Meet new people and make new friends!

In addition to the workshops offered at T&E II, the NIC staff will be available to assist you in reviewing and preparing your proposal.

### The ML/C Sacramento Conference

In Sacramento NIC uses a format where proposals are presented to commissions in four successive rounds (each of increasing size) at “*Proposal Hearings*”. Commissions are led by a Commission Chair and are initially composed of less than 20 delegate/commissioners.

During the Sacramento conference:

- Every commissioner will have several opportunities to speak.
- Commissioners engage in intense discussions, argue in favor of their own proposal and debate the merits and flaws of other commissioners' proposals in four forums/hearings of ever increasing size (we call these forums “*rounds*”).
- At the end of each round, commissioners will rank the proposals presented using specific criteria. The proposals that *advance* to the next round are determined by each proposals composite score from these rankings.
- In General Assembly (“GA” the fourth and final round), the top proposals (approximately 20 proposals) are presented by their author to the entire NIC body (250 – 300 commissioners) and the proposal is passed or defeated.



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## NIC Names: Terms to Know

<i>Administrative Clerk:</i>	The officer elected to head the NIC office and administer the ranking process.
<i>Commission Chair:</i>	The title of the commissioner selected to chair (run) a commission.
<i>Commission Hearing:</i>	Refers to Rounds One, Two and Three of the proposal hearing process. Each of these rounds is progressively larger, with the initial round consisting of approximately 20 people, the second round with 40 people and the third round with approximately 80 people. Also referred to as “Rounds” or simply “Commissions.”
<i>Commissioner:</i>	The title of delegates in NIC.
<i>GA:</i>	General Assembly, the Final Round of the NIC conference. All commissioners are present at GA.
<i>NIC:</i>	National Issues Commission
<i>Presiding Commissioner:</i>	The title of the four officers elected to preside over the NIC.
<i>Proposal:</i>	A commissioner’s one-page research report (proposal) on a topic of international/national scope of their choice.
<i>Ranking:</i>	The method by which proposals are evaluated and compared at Sac. This method is used in place of voting.

## II. Writing & Presenting Your Proposal

Unlike the legislative houses, the NIC has every commissioner prepare and present on their own proposal. Below are important details on how to write your proposal, which is due *UPON ARRIVAL at T&E II*.

### Selecting a Topic

The first step in writing your proposal is selecting a topic of national or international importance.

To determine whether or not a topic is of national or international importance, ask yourself and your advisors the following questions:

- Who would be affected by this policy?  
*If the people affected go beyond the state of California, then your topic is appropriate (i.e. the policy’s impact is not limited to the residents of a specific state).*
- Who would implement the solution (action to be taken) you propose?  
*If your answer is the federal government or an international body, then your topic is likely to have the proper scope.*



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If you answer yes to **BOTH**, of the above questions, then your topic is appropriate.

*Past proposals have dealt with a wide range of topics including (but not limited to):*

- Abolishing the Electoral College
- Abortion / RU-486
- Campaign Finance Reform
- Child Labor / Sweatshop Labor
- Daylight Savings Time
- Death Penalty
- Economic Sanctions
- Elimination of Political Parties
- Elimination of the Military
- Environmental Protection
- Federal Funding for Child Care for Welfare Recipients
- Free Trade
- Homosexuals in the Military
- Hydrogen Fuel
- Immigration to the US
- Internet Security
- Legalizing Marijuana
- Legalizing Same-Sex Marriages
- Low-income Housing
- Lowering the voting age
- Mandated Labeling of Genetically Modified Foods
- Mandating Stronger Rape Sentences
- Mandatory Gun Registration
- National Education Standards
- Nationalized Healthcare
- Nuclear Warfare
- Organ Tissue Transplants
- Population Growth
- Prohibiting Aid to Countries Who Violate Human Rights
- Removal of Nicotine from Tobacco
- Repossession of the Panama Canal
- Social Security
- Federal Taxation of Minors

You are encouraged to create your own unique proposal. The list above is merely provided to give you an idea of the scope of topics addressed every year in the NIC.

Additional resources for selecting a topic can be found in Addendum #2 *Where to Develop Your Proposal*.

## Researching Your Proposal

Outside of selecting a topic, researching your proposal is the most important thing to do before writing your proposal. Research will give you the supporting evidence needed to write an effective proposal and provides the background information on why your proposed action is necessary.

There are many research resources available to you via the internet, your school 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 a feel for current topics of interest.

After you have selected your topic, you will need to find supporting documentation -- both for your justification and your speech. This evidence can be in the form of facts, figures, testimonials from "experts" as well as historical evidence or past precedence.

Additionally, we have included a bibliography of online and library resources in Addendum #1 *Where to Research Your Proposal*.



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## Writing Your Proposal

Writing a NIC proposal is easy! NIC proposals are no more than one page (typed) and consist of three sections. The proposal format is designed to allow for creativity and persuasive argumentation. Proposals are a written idea, not rigid legislation.

### *Proposal Format:*

Every proposal has three sections (detailed below). Please include your name (as author) and delegation at the top of each page.

1. ***Topic of Concern:*** A concise statement or title of the issue being addressed (ex. Legalizing Same-Sex Marriages). Your topic of concern should not be more than one sentence long.
2. ***Justification:*** Approximately 1-2 paragraphs that describe the proposal's concept and offer an argument in favor of the proposed solution. This section utilizes research to describe the problem being addressed and how to fix it. This is the place for facts, figures, history, narratives. (ex. Same sex marriages must be legalized because.....)
3. ***Action to Be Taken:*** 1-2 sentences describing the specific policy(ies) that would be enacted to address this situation and who (or what) would enact the policy(ies). (ex. the United States will add a constitutional amendment legalizing marriages between two people of the same sex.)

All proposals must follow this format and be **approved by their advisor before submission**. Proposals must deal with laws or issues that are national or international in scope. It is mandatory that delegates from the same delegation write on different topics.

*Sample Proposals* are included in section #3 of the Addendum.

## Presenting Your Proposal

In the NIC, every author presents their proposal and has the opportunity to comment on other proposals throughout the conference. At T&E II, you will be offered extensive training on how to present your proposal, however some key details are listed below.

- You, and every other commissioner, will have 2 minutes during Round One to present your speech on your proposal to your commission.
- Your two minutes are for supporting your proposal and presenting additional evidence. Do not restate or read your written proposal.
- 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.

We encourage the use of visual aids in your presentation, however all visual aids/handouts must be approved by a member of the NIC staff *before* distribution.



## III. Ranking Procedures & Evaluation Criteria

As part of the proposal advancement process, every proposal is ranked after it is heard in commission. 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:

### **Ranking 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.



## IV. Timeline for Submitting Your Proposal

In order to participate in NIC you must have a proposal.

- Preliminary drafts of your proposal are due at NIC check-in during T&E II
- **Final proposals are due via the <http://nic.calymca.org> website approximately one week after T&E II (the exact date will be published prior to T&E II).**
- All proposals must be submitted in the correct format and approved by your advisor.

### T&E II Proposal Drafts

Proposal drafts are due at T&E II. You will not be able to participate in the NIC training sessions without a proposal. Please follow the directions below for T&E II:

- **Proposals must be submitted at NIC CHECK-IN** (the first NIC Session) on Saturday of T&E II.
- Proposals must be typed and legible. All proposals must be written in the correct format.
- You must **bring ten copies** of your proposal. These will be distributed to fellow commissioners for use in a proposal-sharing workshop. You cannot participate in this workshop without a proposal.
- One proposal draft must be **signed/approved by your advisor.**

At the end of T&E II you will have had the opportunity to review your proposal with fellow commissioners and receive valuable feedback on presenting your proposal.

### Final Proposals

Final proposals are due via <http://nic.calymca.org> after T&E II. Please follow the guidelines below for submitting your final proposal:

- Proposals can only be submitted via the website.
- **The exact final deadline for proposal submission changes year to year but is always no earlier than one week after T&E II and no later than 2 weeks after T&E II.**
- Proposals can be submitted earlier. Proposals will **not** be accepted after the deadline.
- If you do not submit your final proposal by this date, you will be dropped from the NIC program and your delegation will severely jeopardize their eligibility for Premiere Delegation.

# WELCOME TO NIC!