

Procedures for Advocacy and Policy Statements

Preamble

The American Anthropological Association encourages its members, committees, commissions, and task forces to bring anthropological perspectives on timely issues into policy, media, and other public venues. In addition to ongoing efforts by such AAA units as the Committee for Human Rights and the Committee on Public Policy, it is sometimes important for either the AAA or one of its units to take a public stand. The AAA has periodically sent advocacy and policy statements and letters in the name of its President in order to bring the full weight of the organization and its leadership to bear on an important issue. While the AAA supports its units and members in this way, respects their right to present statements and letters in their own voices, and recognizes the need for intellectual diversity and freedom, a set of simple steps is necessary to ensure that statements issued in the AAA's name and directed to audiences outside the AAA represent as broad a consensus of AAA members as possible, reflect relevant anthropological scholarship, and do not unnecessarily jeopardize the AAA.

Procedures

As a result, the Executive Board has adopted the following procedures for considering requests by AAA members and units to issue letters and advocacy and policy statements in the name of the AAA. Once a draft statement has been approved by no less than a majority of a committee, commission or task force, it should be submitted to the AAA President who will consult with AAA EB officers, the AAA Executive Director, and AAA's legal counsel as needed before statements are forwarded to the addressees or published on the AAA website. In most cases, advocacy and policy statements will be given expedited review and signed by the President (or his or her designee) or returned to the signatories by the AAA President within two weeks of their submission to the AAA Office.

I. In general, a minimum of two weeks lead time is necessary for review of advocacy letters and/or statements.

Correspondence should contain the following elements in a cover letter:

- i. Summary of the issue.
- ii. Brief history, if any, of relevant AAA positions or advocacy, statements, or resolutions, as well as those of other social science associations or other relevant organizations, if known.
- iii. List of other groups supporting the effort or cause (with contact information, if possible).

iv. Contact information for lead advocate/commission or committee working on the issue/concern and contact information for outside experts (i.e., non-AAA committee or board member, if possible).

v. Response deadline and reason why response is needed by this date (no less than two weeks from time of submission).

vi. Follow-up plans or description of next steps, where appropriate.

vii. Brief appendices, where appropriate, including reference documents, bibliography of published articles, etc.

II. Provisions for expedited review.

Correspondence should contain the following elements in a cover letter:

i. Summary of the issue.

ii. Clear and compelling reasons why the issue must be considered in less than two weeks and the deadline for AAA response.

iii. Contact information for lead advocate/commission or committee member working on the issue/concern, and, if available and appropriate, for AAA members and/or others with relevant research or advocacy engagement with the issue.

iv. If information on the history (if any) of advocacy by the AAA, other anthropological associations, other social science associations, or other relevant organizations adopting positions on the issue is available, it may be included as well. Such information is not required for expedited reviews in order to avoid imposing stipulations that would prevent timely submission of requests.

III. In the rare event that the AAA President declines the request or requires a change in the original text that is not deemed acceptable to the submitting unit or AAA member, the unit may appeal the decision through the following process:

i. A cover letter that specifies why the President's decision is unsatisfactory and the desired result (i.e., approval of the original statement or of a modified statement), along with the original request, original cover letter, the President's response, and all relevant correspondence, must be submitted to the Section & Governance Coordinator, an AAA staff member.

ii. The Section & Governance Coordinator will solicit from the President a statement regarding why she or he declined to approve the letter or statement or requested changes.

iii. The Section & Governance Coordinator will circulate these materials to the AAA Executive Board (EB). The AAA Secretary (who sits on the EB) will moderate discussion by the EB, which will consider both positions and then take a vote as to whether or not AAA support should be granted.

iv. If a majority of EB members deem it appropriate to grant AAA support for the letter or statement, the EB may delegate an EB member sign on behalf of the Executive Board. The EB may also suggest that a unit issue a statement in its own name, provided that it is clear that she or he is speaking as an individual in the unit and not on behalf of the AAA.