

Guidelines and Procedures for Review of Policy Statements  
Society for Applied Anthropology  
[approved by SfAA Board 4/22/98]

## **I. Guidelines**

Applied anthropological research frequently yields important information and insights into contemporary social situations and processes. This anthropological point of view can and should inform the development of public policy. From time to time a member or group asks SfAA to take a stand on an issue of public policy. While it is important for the organization to be selective in the issues it pursues, thoughtful involvement by SfAA in public policy is appropriate to the mission of the organization. In order for SfAA to take informed action on requests for policy endorsements, proponents of policy statements should provide thorough and convincing arguments. These guidelines set forth the content and format for a well-argued proposal for SfAA's endorsement of policy statements.

Policy statements issued by SfAA can be used to inform the policy debate in many ways. Some people make a clear distinction between expertise and advocacy. However, participating in the formation of public policy is always, either explicitly or implicitly, a political act. Endorsement of a policy statement demonstrates support for a particular point of view that informs a process in which many points of view and many interests are voiced. SfAA's contribution to the policy process is to provide an anthropological point of view that can be used in the context of informed advocacy.

The Board of SfAA will need two products: a proposal and a clear and succinct policy statement which is suitable for public dissemination. Proposals for SfAA endorsement should include the following elements:

1. A succinct history of the issue. Requests for policy endorsements should include a description of the context, the situation being addressed, and who is affected and how.
2. The anthropological interest. This section should include a discussion of how the anthropologist(s) requesting the policy endorsement have come to be involved, the nature of the involvement, and the interests of SfAA.
3. Relationship to existing anthropological research. Policy statements endorsed by the SfAA should reflect a distinctively anthropological perspective. The request for endorsement should include a well-argued brief on expert grounds for the position being sought. This section of the proposal must demonstrate the thorough weighing of the range of anthropological evidence and must then demonstrate why the preponderance of anthropological judgment favors the requested

position. Include a list of references cited.

4. Recommendations. Requests for policy endorsement must specify policy recommendations, not just conclusions, and indicate who is requested to act. The way in which the recommendations derive from the preponderance of anthropological research should be clearly demonstrated.

5. Strategic Analysis. SfAA is interested in issuing policy statements that contribute to public debate. A strategic description of the policy context in which an SfAA statement will be used should be provided. Issues that should be addressed include:

- What is the process in which the policy statement will be used?
- Who makes the ultimate decision?
- Who are the players contributing to the debate and what are their viewpoints? !How do the players participate?
- What is the timeline?
- What players are likely to support or oppose the SfAA perspective?
- Specifically, how will the requested SfAA policy statement be used?
- Discuss possible public products (e.g., op-eds, position papers, comments on regulations and official policies, etc.). The public products should be short and clear.

As noted, at least one example of a policy statement for public dissemination should be included with the proposal.

[Guidelines: Draft 6, 1/17/98]

## **II. Procedures**

1. Any SfAA committee, topical interest group, or member or fellow in good standing (the policy proponent(s)) may submit a proposal for policy endorsement. The proposal should be submitted to the chairman, SfAA Public Policy Committee (who also serves as SfAA policy coordinator), with a copy to the SfAA president.

2. The policy committee is intended to act as a catalyst and resource on policy issues, not as a censor or arbiter of what positions SfAA should or should not endorse. The policy committee will review the proposal for conformity with the guidelines; may request the proponent(s) to revise the proposal and sample policy statement accordingly; may suggest coordination with SfAA committees or TIGs having similar concerns; and may also suggest additional means of communicating the proposed policy perspective. The policy committee shall make a recommendation to the SfAA Board of Directors regarding endorsement of the proposal. Policy proponent(s) disagreeing with the recommendations of the policy committee are free to

communicate their concerns directly to the board through the SfAA president.

3. The SfAA president and policy coordinator will work to ensure timely review by the policy committee and board, given the deadlines relevant to the issue at hand. Where urgent deadlines exist, the president may modify these review procedures.

4. The board may endorse the proposal, request revisions to strengthen the form or substance of the proposal, or decline endorsement. In endorsing a policy position the board may choose to retain responsibility for disseminating this information, or may authorize the proponent(s) to do so on behalf of SfAA.

5. Under these procedures the SfAA board is asked to endorse a policy position and a strategy for communicating it to relevant audiences. The board is not asked to approve a particular "product" (letter, press release, committee testimony, etc.). When the board authorizes the policy proponent(s) to publicize an endorsed position, this implies approval of the policy statement in various forms without further review by the board or the policy committee, within the limits set forth in the endorsed proposal. The proponent(s) shall promptly submit two copies of any statements released under these procedures to the SfAA policy coordinator.

6. No committee, TIG, or individual advocating a policy position may use the name of the Society for Applied Anthropology in such a way as to imply SfAA's endorsement of that position without specific approval by the SfAA board as set forth in these procedures.

[Procedures: Draft 2, 1/17/98]

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