

What is Policy Development and How can we do it effectively?

When researching bills, you may have come across several pieces of legislation where one part is excellent, but is countered by a harm presented by another part of the same bill. If this captures your perspective, you might think that there may be a better solution that lies outside of the text of the bills you have researched. This section might be especially helpful to you!

First, policy development is the process of developing policy through research, analysis, consultation, and synthesis of information to produce recommendations for your legislator. [This](#) resource from the Congressional Research Services (CRS) further explains the importance of policy development and recommendations.

You do not have to write your own bill, but you can outline 3 items you would like to see in a policy that could then be drafted and introduced.

Here are some steps to take:

- 1) Read through the bills related to the issue using the steps outlined in [Part 1](#)
- 2) Record certain aspects of different bills you think could collectively form a comprehensive solution
- 3) Also, record the cons which indicate why you did not choose the bill on its own and decided to opt for policy development instead
- 4) Do additional research on the issue and read articles that have outlined specific problems or loopholes which indicate why this problem has not yet been effectively addressed
- 5) This is optional: Contact local law enforcement, researchers, professors, and/or grad students who work/study the area in which the issue lies in order to gain more information and insight firsthand
- 6) Draw on your own and your peers' first hand experiences with the issue through community service and immersion trips
- 7) Consult the teachings of your religious denomination if you have one on the issue to help articulate moral arguments in support of your preferred solutions, and in opposition to cons in existing legislation. For Catholic social teaching and advocacy resources see
 - a) USCCB Legislative Advocacy Resources
<http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/catholic-education/advocacy/index.cfm>

- b) California Catholic Conference Take Action: Legislation
<http://www.cacatholic.org/take-action/legislation-0>
- c) CRS Advocacy Education Toolkit
http://ghs.crs.org/advocacy-education?_ga=2.82634516.306618943.1519315577-546563515.1515111647
- d) Catholic Charities Advocacy Center
<https://catholiccharitiesusa.org/advocacy-and-policy/advocacy-center>

Utilize all of this information and resources to draft a list of 3-4 items that could become the starting point of a new piece of legislation.

Here is an example using Gun Control Legislation:

In our current political climate, it is very difficult to absolutely ban guns or even semi-automatic weapons.

However, there are many loopholes in current legislation that are causing these weapons into fall into the hands of those with negative intentions. By pinpointing these issues and advocating for more specific reform, more legislation that regulates guns can be passed.

One example is an [article](#) written in the Catholic perspective by SCU professor, Fr. Gerald Coleman. It argues that thoughts and prayers are not enough to create change, but advocacy and policy can effectively lay the foundation for resolution.

Another example, is [Nicholas Kristof](#)'s New York Times editorial, argues that guns should be handled the way the government has handled drunk driving, airport security, and other similar issues that have major impacts to public health and safety.

He points out 9 specific areas missing from current gun control legislation:

Background Checks

22 percent of guns are obtained without one.

Protection Orders

Keep men who are subject to domestic violence protection orders from having guns.

Ban Under-21s

A ban on people under 21 purchasing firearms (this is already the case in many states).

Safe Storage

These include trigger locks as well as guns and ammunition stored separately, especially when children are in the house.

Straw Purchases

Tighter enforcement of laws on straw purchases of weapons, and some limits on how many guns can be purchased in a month.

Ammunition Checks

Experimentation with a one-time background check for anybody buying ammunition.

End Immunity

End immunity for firearm companies. That's a subsidy to a particular industry.

Ban Bump Stocks

A ban on bump stocks of the kind used in Las Vegas to mimic automatic weapon fire.

Research 'Smart Guns'

"Smart guns" fire only after a fingerprint or PIN is entered, or if used near a particular bracelet.

If we were to pursue policy proposals on this issue, we would start with areas such as these:

- 1) conduct specific research on current legislation and efforts to regulate these loopholes
- 2) the level of partisanship in these areas
- 3) draft and iterate potential solutions