

## *Questions of Policy*

Questions of policy concern what should be done, what procedures should be adopted, what law should be changed, in short, what policy should be followed. In some speeches you may want to defend a specific policy, whereas in other speeches you may wish to criticize or argue that a current policy should be discontinued.

Persuasive speeches frequently revolve around questions of policy, for example:

- Hate speech should be banned in colleges.
- Our community should adopt a zero tolerance policy for guns in schools.
- Abortion should be available on demand.
- Music CDs should be rated for violence and profanity.
- Divorce should be granted by mutual consent.
- The college should adopt a sexual harassment policy.
- Marijuana should be legalized.
- Smoking should be banned from all public buildings and parks.

As you can tell from these examples, questions of policy almost invariably involve questions of values. To argue, for example, that hate speech should be banned in colleges is based on the value that hate speech is wrong. To argue for a zero tolerance policy on guns in schools assumes you think it's wrong for students and faculty to carry guns to school.

Like speeches dealing with questions of fact and value, you can develop your speech on questions of policy by asking a strategic question of your thesis. With policy issues, the questions would be, why should the proposed policy be adopted? or why is the proposed policy desirable? or why is this policy better than what we now have? For example, taking our first example, we might ask, why should hate speech be banned on campus? From the answers to this question, you would develop your major propositions, which might look something like this:

- I. Hate speech encourages violence against women and minorities.
- II. Hate speech denigrates women and minorities.
- III. Hate speech teaches hate instead of tolerance.

You would then support each of these propositions with a variety of supporting materials that would convince your audience that hate speech should be banned from college campuses. For example, you might cite the web sites put up by certain groups that advocate violence against women and certain minority members. Or, you might cite examples from the lyrics of performers who came to campus. And of course you might cite examples of actual violence that had been accompanied by hate speech or hate literature.

In some speeches of policy you might simply want your listeners to agree that the policy you're advocating is a good one. In other cases you might want them to do something about the policy to vote for a particular candidate, to take Vitamin C, to diet, to write to their elected officials, to participate in the walkathon, to wear an AIDS

awareness ribbon, and so on.

Generally, questions of policy are used as theses more often than as major propositions. Still, in some instances, you might phrase a major proposition around a policy issue. For example, a lawyer might want to argue that the alcohol level that should be used to establish drunk driving should be much higher than it currently is in a speech designed to get a client off on a driving-while-intoxicated charge.

In developing your speech of policy, consider the following suggestions:

1. Prove that the policy is needed. You might, for example, show that a health care plan is needed because currently workers have no health care coverage. Or, you might show that a particular policy is needed because the current policy is inadequate.
2. Emphasize that the policy you're supporting is practical and reasonable. Emphasize that it can be put into operation. If possible, show that the policy you're advocating has been successfully put into operation elsewhere.
3. Clearly define the policy so that its provisions are clear and unambiguous.
4. Show your listeners how the policy will benefit them directly. Generally, listeners want to know that changes will prove beneficial to them on a personal level. The more personal you can make this policy, the better it will be received.
5. When asking for action, ask for small, easily performed, and very specific behaviors. For example, generally at least, it will be easier to get listeners to sign a petition than to donate their Saturday afternoon to a walkathon. Similarly, it's likely to be easier to get listeners to contribute \$1 to the athletic fund than \$20.
6. Use an organizational pattern that best fits your topic. For example, in the "zero tolerance on school guns" speech, you might consider using a problem/solution pattern in which your speech would be divided into two basic parts:
  - I. Guns are destroying our high schools. (problem)
    - A. Three students were killed this year from guns students brought into school.
    - B. Guns establish a frightened and frightening environment.
    - C. Guns make recruiting new teachers extremely difficult.
  - II. We must adopt a zero tolerance policy. (solution)
    - A. Metal detectors must be installed to prevent any guns from entering school buildings.
    - B. Severe punishments must be established for violating this policy.
      1. Anyone carrying guns into school should be expelled or fired on the spot.
      2. Anyone carrying guns into school should be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

In many cases, the motivated sequence will prove effective. For example, in the “hate speech: example, you might use a motivated sequence and develop the speech somewhat as follows:

- |               |      |  |
|---------------|------|--|
| Attention     | I.   | Here are just a few examples of the hate speech I collected right here on campus. [Show slides 1-7]  |
| Need          | II.  | Hate speech creates all sorts of problems.<br>A. Hate speech encourages violence.<br>B. Hate speech denigrates women and minorities.<br>C. Hate speech teaches intolerance.  |
| Satisfaction  | III. | If we re to build an effective learning environment, hate speech must go.  |
| Visualization | IV.  | Banning hate speech will help us build an environment conducive to learning.<br>A. Students will not fear violence.<br>B. Women and minorities will not feel as if they are second-class citizens.<br>C. Tolerance can replace intolerance |
| Action        | V.   | Sign my petition urging the administration to take action, to ban hate speech.   |

If you’re persuading your listeners that one policy will be more effective than another (say the present one), then a comparison and contrast order might work best. Here you might divide each of your major propositions into two parts the present plan and the proposed plan to enable you to effectively compare and contrast them on each issue. The body of your speech might look something like this:

- I. The plans are different in their coverage for psychiatric problems.
  - A. The present plan offers nothing for such problems.
  - B. The proposed plan treats psychiatric problems with the same coverage as physical problems.
- II. The plans differ in their deductibles.
  - A. The present plan has a \$2000 deductible.
  - B. The proposed plan has a \$500 deductible.
- III. The plans differ in the hospitalization allowances.
  - A. In the present plan 2 days are allowed for childbirth; in the proposed plan 4 days are allowed.
  - B. In the present plan all patients are assigned to large wards; in the proposed plan all patients are assigned to semi-private rooms.