

Chapters Advisory Council Proposal

A proposal for greater involvement of Chapters in the position and policy brief development process

Background

Interactions with national policy makers

In the past, there have been occasions when ISOC staff met with national policy makers without involving the national chapter in any way. Since national chapters often have good relations with national officials, it would be preferable if the chapters are also involved in meetings with national officials. We propose a recommendation below to that effect.

Consulting the membership during the policy development process

At present, there does not seem to be a consistent practice within ISOC regarding the role of the membership in the policy development process and the preparation of background and position papers that ISOC puts forward. Specifically, some policy papers are submitted to the membership for comment, specifically the policy briefs, while others papers, such as position papers, are not. In one case, the membership was not informed of a specific submission. It appears to us that systematic consultation with the membership can only improve the quality of a policy, background paper, or position paper. The intent is not to change ISOC's current decision-making process for such papers: staff would remain fully responsible for the final version of the paper. The intent is to allow staff to benefit systematically from the views of the membership, and to decide whether or how to incorporate comments from the membership. We propose a recommendation below to that effect.

Recommendations

Interactions with national policy makers

Review with the chapters policy positions and alliances before they are made, and inform chapters of meetings with national policy makers, unless time constraints do not permit it. We have active mailing lists that can make it quick and easy. (Note: in case of policies that affect countries in any region or country, or meetings with officials of the region or country, the chapters in that region or country should be consulted and informed.)

Consulting the membership during the policy development process

In general, policy, background and position papers, including policy briefs should be submitted to the membership for comment prior to publication, with the understanding that staff has responsibility for issuing the final official version under delegated authority from the Trustees. Staff can choose the most appropriate method to consult the membership, for example by asking for volunteers to review drafts, by posting a draft for comment to a mailing list, by convening a virtual meeting to discuss the issues, etc.

Further, when papers are published and/or submitted to some entity outside ISOC, the membership should be informed and a link to the paper should be sent to the appropriate mailing list and to the Chapter Delegate's mailing list just prior to the publication or submission.