

IEEE-USA Government Relations Council

A GUIDE TO PREPARING IEEE-USA POSITION STATEMENTS

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Introduction: IEEE-USA regularly issues position statements for the purposes of making public policy recommendations to targeted audiences, and especially to U.S. government policy-makers at the federal, state and/or local level. Policies governing IEEE-USA position statements are outlined in IEEE-USA Policy 10 (source: <http://www.ieeeusa.org/volunteers/files/opmana.pdf>) and are briefly summarized in this guide along with other suggestions for developing effective position statements.

Definition: IEEE-USA Policy 10.2.1 defines a position statement as “a document issued in the name of IEEE-USA that makes U.S. public policy recommendations on a specific topic, and that was developed and approved in accordance with the guidelines outlined in Sections 10.3-10.4.” Position statements are differentiated from whitepapers, which are defined as “a document issued as an IEEE-USA communication that provides information on U.S. public policy issue(s) and/or policy options, but which refrains from making policy recommendations or stating a position of the IEEE-USA” (Policy 10.2.2) and from amicus curiae “friend of the court” legal briefs, which have their own format and approval requirements. In practice, IEEE-USA also distinguishes “position statements” from “policy communications”, which are letters, testimonies, and similar documents sent to policy-makers, which communicate policy recommendations and information based on, or consistent with, approved position statements.

Purposes of Position Statements: The basic function of a position statement is to communicate public policy recommendations. To that end, position statements serve several related purposes:

1. To advocate public policy
 - Identify problems in need of policy solutions
 - Identify policy options/solutions (also done by white papers)
 - State general principles or guidelines for a policy solution

- Support or oppose passage of a bill or adoption of a regulation
 - Propose amendments/revisions to a bill or regulation
2. To authorize subsequent policy communications (e.g. letters, testimony, amicus curiae briefs) on legislation, regulations or proposals whose subject matter is encompassed within the position statement.
 3. To educate policy makers and/or the public*
 - Outline policy options and their implications (pros and cons)
 - Explain how technology works (capabilities and limits) to inform policy (e.g. don't break the laws of nature)
 - Societal implications of the technology
 - Communicate the status and needs of the profession

* This is an incidental role and should not be the primary purpose of a position statement.

Education is better accomplished through policy whitepapers and reports, which are not subject to the length and formatting constraints of position statements, and which allow IEEE-USA to more freely explore policy-related topics without stating a position or specific policy recommendation.

In considering whether or not to initiate a position statement, committees are encouraged to consider whether other forms of policy content and communication (e.g. a whitepaper, an E-book, a briefing, a press release, etc.) would be more effective.

Key Elements of an Effective Position Statement: The following are key elements or features of an effective position statement:

- Answers the essential “who, what, when, how, and why” questions:
 - To whom the request is being made
 - Precisely what is being requested
 - When does it need to be done
 - How should it be done
 - Why it is important
- Is concise
- Provides clear and unambiguous requests and recommendations
- Provides compelling rationales, supported by policy analysis and data from credible sources
- Is written to the level/understanding of target audience and avoids technical jargon, acronyms, etc
- In the absence of a consensus, acknowledges areas of significant disagreement/dissenting views (and provides persuasive responses where appropriate)
- Identifies the IEEE-USA as the source of the position and communicates our qualifications/credibility in a consistent manner.

Specific Content Guidelines: IEEE-USA Policy 10.4 provides the following specific guidelines for content of position statements:

- Position Statements should be politically relevant, be based on accurate technical information, and must present specific policy recommendations that are clear, concise, persuasive, and supported by relevant background information.
- Position statements should reflect the views of IEEE U.S. members as discerned through appropriate mechanisms including opinion surveys. While it is not expected that every member would support every position, it is important that IEEE-USA positions reflect views supported by a significant majority of the IEEE U.S. membership with knowledge of the issue. Where there is no clear consensus of opinion among U.S. members with knowledge and expertise in the issue, IEEE-USA should refrain from taking a position or should expand the position to incorporate the alternative or dissenting viewpoints.
- Technology policy-related position statements should be consistent with any existing Technical Information Statements (TIS) published by IEEE technical units. The authors of relevant TIS statements should be invited to participate in drafting and/or review of any related IEEE-USA position statements.

Specific Format Guidelines: IEEE-USA Policy 10.5 provides the following specific guidelines for the format of position statements:

- IEEE-USA position statements will be published on special letterhead prepared for the purpose of identifying the document as an IEEE-USA position statement.
- The heading of the position statement will include a title (in prominent text), the name of the approving unit, and the date of approval.
- IEEE-USA staff will develop and follow consistent guidelines for production of position statements, including preferred type font, type size, margins, headings, page numbers, notes, etc.

Production Guidelines	
Type Font	Arial
Type Size	12 pt
Margins	1" (top, bottom, left, right)
Headings	Title: 16pt type, all caps, bold, italic 1 st level – 12pt type, all caps/bold 2 nd level – 12pt type, lower case/bold 3 rd level – 12pt type, lower case/underline
Page Numbers	Bottom, centered
Lists	Numbers (to convey priority order) or Bullets (if no priority order). Use lower case letters (if prioritized) or dashes (if not) for indented sub-lists.
Notes	Foot notes (11pt type)

- Generally, position statements should be limited to no more than one page in length (front and back), with recommendations prominently featured on the front/first page of the statement. Additional rationales, explanations, and supporting materials can be provided where appropriate (and become part of the statement) by inclusion in an appended "Background" section. Ideally, a position statement with background additions should be no more than 5 total pages in length.
- Each position statement shall contain the following disclaimer at the close of the formal statement (and before any background or attached materials): ‘This statement was developed by the IEEE-USA (NAME OF COMMITTEE OR UNIT) and represents the considered judgment of a group of U.S. IEEE members with expertise in the subject field. IEEE-USA advances the public good and promotes the careers and public policy interests of the (more than) (CURRENT MEMBER#) engineers, scientists and allied professionals who are U.S. members of the IEEE. The positions taken by IEEE-USA do not necessarily reflect the views of IEEE or its other organizational units.’”

The Position Development and Approval Process: A Position Statement may be proposed by any IEEE-USA or IEEE organizational unit for issuance as an IEEE-USA position statement provided that the subject of the statement falls within the purposes and scope of the IEEE-USA as set forth in the IEEE Constitution, IEEE Bylaws, IEEE Policies and the IEEE-USA Operations Manual (IEEE-USA Policy 10.3.1). A position statement may be issued when it has been approved by a majority vote of the IEEE-USA Board of Directors at a properly called regular or special meeting (IEEE-USA Policy 10.3.2) or by unanimous vote using electronic balloting between meetings. Under certain limited circumstances, the IEEE-USA President may authorize early release of a position statement that has been endorsed by the IEEE-USA Operating Committee, but is still pending Board approval (IEEE-USA Policy 10.3.3).

A position statement typically goes through the following steps of review and endorsement culminating in the presentation of a final draft to the IEEE-USA Board of Directors for approval.

1. Issue identification and position initiation (by committee, or on referral of request by IEEE-USA President, IEEE-USA Board of Directors/OpCom, Vice President of Government Relations or Government Relations Council).
2. Research, drafting and committee review (assignments by committee chair with support of committee members)
3. Committee approval (per charter, by majority vote or consensus if possible).
4. Review and endorsement by the Government Relations Council.
5. IEEE-USA Editorial Review (basic editorial including grammar, spelling, and compliance with format guidelines)
6. Review and endorsement by IEEE-USA OpCom (optional interim step)
7. Copies to IEEE Presidents for comment (at least one week prior to Board meeting)
8. Review and approval by IEEE-USA Board of Directors

Individuals appointed by IEEE regions, sections, divisions, societies or other organizational units to serve on IEEE-USA government relations committees as their representatives should seek pertinent input, suggestions and feedback from their organizations for consideration during the development of the position statement.

Every effort should be made to circulate proposed position statements for Board consideration well before the scheduled Board meeting to allow sufficient time for questions to be answered and issues to be resolved prior to the Board's vote.

Specific Requirements for Endorsement/Approval

To be considered for endorsement by the IEEE-USA Operating Committee or approval by the IEEE-USA Board of Directors, a proposed position statement must be circulated electronically at least one week (7 days) prior to the scheduled vote.

When presenting a position statement for endorsement or approval, it should be accompanied by a cover memorandum (see Appendix for template) that incorporates the following information as background:

- The name of the position statement
- The name of the originating individual or entity
- The names of units or organizations that have reviewed and endorsed the draft (with dates)
- The proposed usage/distribution of the statement
- The action requested (endorsement or approval) in the form of a motion;
- A brief statement of rationale in support of the action requested
- Relationship to any prior or currently active position statements on the same or similar issues
- Any additional background information needed or requested for the benefit of the reviewers (but not for incorporation in the position itself)

When the statement concerns a technology policy issue, a list of the appointed representatives (and the organizational units they represented) who participated in the development and/or review of the draft statement should be appended to the cover memorandum, along with any written commentary or objections received by other IEEE organizational units.

Where strong dissenting views have been expressed within the body originating the proposed statement, those views and their source(s) should be noted and explained as part of the cover memorandum accompanying the proposed position statement for approval.

Availability of IEEE-USA Position Statements: Following approval, IEEE-USA position statements are formatted and published as PDF files on the IEEE-USA Position Statement webpage (<http://www.ieeeusa.org/policy/positions/>), which acts as the official repository for all current IEEE-USA positions. These official statements can be linked to, downloaded for circulation by email, or printed to be mailed or faxed as needed. Statements may also be excerpted in other communications with appropriate attribution to IEEE-USA, including a reference note or link to the authoritative text. It is up to the originating entity to determine what additional dissemination is desired.

Review and Sun-setting of Position Statements: At the beginning of each year, initiating committees should take the initiative to review the currently approved position statements within their subject-matter areas, determine whether the statement(s) needs to be updated or withdrawn, and make appropriate proposals for Board action. IEEE-USA Policy 10.6 also provides for automatic withdrawal (“sun-setting”) of position statements after five years unless a recommendation for extension or revision is currently pending before the IEEE-USA Operating Committee or Board of Directors.

It is also appropriate for proposing committees to include a withdrawal date or condition in its proposed motion for endorsement or Board approval. For example, a motion for approval of a position statement supporting a specific piece of legislation should note that the position statement would be automatically withdrawn upon passage of the bill into law and/or at the end of the current Congress.

APPENDIX – POSITION STATEMENT APPROVAL TEMPLATE

POSITION STATEMENT REVIEW

TO: IEEE-USA (BOARD OF DIRECTORS/OPCOM)

FROM: (NAME)
Vice President, Government Relations

DATE: (DATE)

SUBJECT: (APPROVAL/ENDORSEMENT/WITHDRAWAL) of a Proposed IEEE-USA Position Statement on “*TITLE OF POSITION STATEMENT*”

Action Requested:

(THE REQUESTED ACTION SHOULD BE STATED IN THE FORM OF A MOTION. THE MOTION MAY BE TO ENDORSE/APPROVE A NEW STATEMENT OR EXTEND AN EXISTING STATEMENT, AND/OR TO REQUEST WITHDRAWAL OF AN EXISTING STATEMENT. OPCOM ENDORSES. THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS APPROVES.)

Originating Committee(s): (NAME)

Review Process:

Entity/Step	Action	Date
Originating Committee		
Gov't Relations Council		
IEEE-USA Editorial Review		
IEEE-USA OpCom (opt.)		
IEEE-USA BoD		

Intended Use/Distribution

(DESCRIBE HOW, WHEN AND TO WHOM THIS POSITION STATEMENT BE DISTRIBUTED)

Related Positions

(DESCRIBE THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE PROPOSED STATEMENT TO ANY PRIOR OR CURRENTLY ACTIVE POSITION STATEMENTS ON THE SAME OR SIMILAR ISSUES. REFERENCE THE RELATED IEEE-USA POSITIONS BY TITLE AND INCLUDE THE URL OF CURRENT STATEMENTS FOR EASE OF REFERENCE)

Rationale:

(PROVIDE A BRIEF STATEMENT OF RATIONALE, WHICH SHOULD INCLUDE A SUMMARY OF KEY RECOMMENDATIONS, A STATEMENT OF WHY THE POSITION STATEMENT IS NEEDED AND A DESCRIPTION OF ANY ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR RESULTS)

List of Technology Society Reviewers:

(APPEND IF STATEMENT CONCERNS A TECHNOLOGY POLICY ISSUE)

Additional Background:

(OPTIONAL: APPEND IF NEEDED)

Dissenting/Alternative Views:

(OPTIONAL: APPEND IF NEEDED)