Policy Alternatives (Policy Tools) memo

File name: lastname_alternatives.doc or .docx or .rtf. Please follow this convention. Please also indicate PA 507 in the email subject line.

Format: 1000 to 2000 words. A concise paper is better than a lengthy one, but the goal is to cover enough information that the reader understands the environment in which policy will be made.

Task description

In this memo, provide a set of policy alternatives that you believe would help solve the problem you identify in the problem memo. Of course, the total solution of the problem is unrealistic and unreasonable, so what you are really doing in this memo is showing alternatives for ameliorating the problem—that is, making it less bad.

Your set of alternative policies should contain no fewer than three courses of action. One of the alternatives must be to “let current trends continue,” an option incorrectly called the “do nothing” option in much of the policy literature. This could be your first alternative. A very broad outline of the paper should look like this:

1. Short introduction (one short paragraph)
2. Policy alternative 1: let present trends continue
   a. Description
   b. Advantages
   c. Disadvantages
   d. Likely outcomes
3. Policy alternative 2:
   a. Description
   b. Advantages
   c. Disadvantages
   d. Likely outcomes
4. Policy alternative 3:
   a. Description
   b. Advantages
   c. Disadvantages
   d. Likely outcomes

For each alternative, describe the policy idea, the expected outcomes of the idea if it were implemented as you intend, and both the advantages and disadvantages of each idea or approach. Memos will be evaluated on the extent to which you honestly and carefully weigh the advantages and disadvantages with high quality evidence. Assertions based in weak or nonexistent evidence will not constitute a successful proposal.
For each idea, you need not get into specifics about, for example, which section of the U.S. Code would be amended, or what regulations you would put into the Code of Federal Regulations. Rather, you should provide enough detail to explain what the policy idea is, how it would work (penalties? Taxes? Incentives? Something else?) and what the expected outcomes would be. You should also assess the expected outcomes.

**Potential sources of information**

1. Existing legislation proposed on the issue, found at [http://thomas.loc.gov](http://thomas.loc.gov)
2. More specialized publications like CQ Weekly Report or Roll Call
3. Congressional hearings are often about specific legislation; so are House and Senate reports, GAO documents, Congressional Research Service (CRS), and other reports. A Google search can find this material, but narrow your search by including the term `site:.gov` after the search term so that you get only results from government sites. Using `site:.edu` will yield material from academics, `site:.org` from groups, and so on.
4. Unlike the agenda-setting assignment, this assignment would benefit greatly from the scientific and professional literature, *if* that literature makes tangible policy recommendations.

The goal of all this information gathering is to find the best possible alternatives from the ones available to you in existing policy debates. Of course, you may find that you want to alter some ideas to fit your particular definition of a problem—this is normal. But the idea is to avoid, as government and industry people often say, “reinventing the wheel.”