



LATINO  
ADVOCACY WEEK

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# LATINO ADVOCACY TOOLKIT 2025

HELPING LATINOS BECOME ADVOCATES  
AND FLEX THEIR POWER







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# LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



**MAITE ARCE**  
PRESIDENT & CEO

Dear Advocates,

I am thrilled to introduce this year's Latino Advocacy Toolkit. This toolkit provides a comprehensive resource for individuals and advocacy groups who are looking to embark on and/or deepen their policy advocacy strategies alongside their communities and decision-makers.

Hispanic Access Foundation is committed to connecting Latinos with partners and opportunities that improves their lives and creates an equitable society. Our vision is that all Latinos throughout the U.S. will enjoy good physical health, a healthy natural environment, a quality education, economic success, and civic engagement in their communities, thus improving the future of America. To achieve our vision, we need to elevate the voices of the people we serve to improve their quality of life and increase access to resources.

The advocacy strategies presented in this toolkit involve communicating with your legislators and other decision-makers via social media, email, phone calls, planned advocacy days, and more. It prepares you to advocate and lobby at all government levels (local, state, and federal) and branches (legislative, executive, and judicial) by providing tools and tips about being an effective advocate.

This all-encompassing advocacy toolkit is for high-level and grassroots/community-based advocacy. We believe that anyone working to change situations in their communities or countries will find this toolkit useful and hope that you will use it to join us as a leader in Latino advocacy.

Thank you for your continued support and commitment to Latino advocacy.

Saludos,





# WELCOME

.....

## WHAT IS THIS TOOLKIT?

This toolkit is a resource to help individuals and advocacy groups effectively engage in policy advocacy at all government levels. It provides clear guidance on communicating with legislators, using digital advocacy tools, and making an impact in your community.

## WHO IS IT FOR?

Anyone interested in advocacy, from students and parents to community leaders and professionals. Whether you're new to advocacy or experienced, this toolkit provides essential tips and strategies to help elevate Latino voices.

## WHAT YOU WILL FIND IN THIS TOOLKIT AND HOW DOES IT WORK?

You don't need to read everything at once. Instead, use the table of contents to find the sections most relevant to your goals. Key areas include:

- **Local Advocacy** – Engaging with local officials and community leaders.
- **Digital Advocacy** – Using social media and online tools to support your cause.
- **Meeting with Policymakers** – How to prepare for and conduct effective meetings.
- **Researching Policy** – Understanding how policies are made and how to find relevant information.
- **Ways to Advocate** – Practical methods for making an impact, from petitions to town halls.



# ADVOCACY 101

## SUMMARY

Whether you're new to policy advocacy or have some experience but want to strengthen your foundational knowledge, this section is for you. You'll learn how to identify advocacy priorities, explore your interests, and take action.

This section also introduces key advocacy terms and provides visual tools to help you strategically engage with the right individuals and organizations to drive social change. You'll discover how to identify your elected officials—at the municipal, state, and national levels—and explore various ways to advocate effectively.

## HOW TO START

Every community has areas that can be improved. Public buildings may need repairs or lack accessibility. Schools often face resource shortages. You may already be passionate about a specific issue, or you might discover that a seemingly small concern is part of a larger systemic problem. Remember, policies can be updated, created, or removed to address these challenges.

A great first step is listening to those around you. What concerns are your neighbors, classmates, local business owners, and service workers voicing? Engaging in conversations can help you identify pressing issues and potential solutions.

For example, if the number of students in English Language Learner (ELL) programs has increased significantly in recent years, how is your school district adapting to meet their needs? Understanding the root of an issue allows you to advocate for meaningful change.



## EXPLORING INTERESTS

Of all the issues you encounter, choose one that resonates most with you. Many social issues are interconnected, so exploring one may lead you to others.

For instance, you might hear that students in your child's school are reading above the state average, yet high school graduation rates remain low. Upon closer examination, you learn that underrepresented students are struggling with reading and math scores. To address this, you could join the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) or a Booster Club to advocate for better educational support.

To take action, seek out local organizations working on the issues that matter to you.

## GETTING INVOLVED

You may already be engaged in your community through school, religious groups, or sports clubs. Advocacy can start with the networks you're already part of. Ask if these groups have advocacy efforts or can connect you with organizations addressing your issue of interest. Many national organizations have local affiliates or chapters you can join.

A simple online search can help you find local advocacy groups. Many organizations have websites outlining ways to get involved, and you may discover opportunities to participate without even leaving home.

**TIP:** You might find that many people in your community are already working on the same issue. This is a great opportunity to connect, collaborate, and amplify your impact. Organizing as a group allows you to build momentum for larger actions or campaigns. However, if you prefer to advocate independently, your voice still matters. Every action, big or small, contributes to change.

**AS ALICE WALKER ONCE SAID, “THE MOST COMMON WAY PEOPLE GIVE UP THEIR POWER IS BY THINKING THEY DON’T HAVE ANY.”**



# POWER MAPPING

Power mapping is a valuable tool for building strategic alliances, focusing actions, and increasing political impact. Creating a power map allows you to visualize key relationships and identify the organizations and individuals you need to engage with to create meaningful change. This process will help guide your next steps—whether that involves contacting an official's office, attending a town hall meeting, or arranging a meeting with a representative. To learn more about power mapping, visit: the [National Education Association](https://www.nationaleducationassociation.org/advocacy/power-mapping).

## STEP 1: IDENTIFY KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Start by listing the main stakeholders—people and organizations that can influence the issue you're advocating for. This list may include:

- The institution, corporation, or policymaker responsible for the problem.
- You and your group.
- Organizations, volunteers, and advocates working to address the issue.
- Community members directly impacted by the problem.
- Officials who have the power to implement solutions but have not yet taken action.

## STEP 2: RESEARCH DECISION-MAKERS

Investigate the people and entities with decision-making power over the issue. Consider:

- Are they allies or opponents of your cause?
- How much influence do they have?
- What are their priorities, values, or past actions on this issue?

If you're working within a group, divide the research among members to cover more ground efficiently.

## STEP 3: CREATE YOUR POWER MAP

1. Draw a set of axes on a large sheet of paper to categorize stakeholders based on two factors:
  - Ally, Opponent, or Target
  - Level of Influence (Low to High)
2. Plot the most influential and supportive stakeholders first. If you're unsure of your primary target, consider which decision-maker is the most accessible.
3. Map out relationships connected to your primary target. These secondary targets could be people who influence or have a close connection to your main decision-maker.
4. Continue mapping outward, identifying connections between stakeholders and determining the best pathway to reach your target.
5. Leverage relationships to strengthen your advocacy. Find allies who can introduce you to key decision-makers or advocate on your behalf.



Though this process can seem complex, visualizing connections through a power map helps create an effective, relationship-based advocacy strategy.

## KEY TERMS IN POWER MAPPING

- **Decision-makers:** Individuals with the authority to implement change, such as politicians, agency directors, school principals, or state education officials.
- **Stakeholders:** People directly impacted by the issue, including community members, nonprofit leaders, university researchers, and think tanks.
- **Partnership:** A collaboration between two individuals or organizations with similar goals.
- **Coalition:** A larger alliance of multiple organizations, institutions, and stakeholders working together toward a common objective.

# WHO ARE MY REPRESENTATIVES?

There are several people that represent you in local, county, state, and federal office and you should get to know them. As taxpayers, they work for us so make your voice heard!

You can learn who your representatives by entering your zip code on the USA.gov website [here](#).

## Find and contact elected officials

Get the names and contact information for the people who represent you on the federal, state, and local levels.

### Find elected officials using a physical address

Enter your physical address in the form below in order to get a list of elected officials at the federal, state, and local levels.

**All fields are required.**

Street address

City

State

ZIP code

Results are provided by the Google Civic Information API. USA.gov does not guarantee the accuracy of results.

[Learn how USA.gov protects your privacy.](#)

**Find my elected officials**

On the [USA.gov website](#), you will find your local, county, state, and federal representatives listed with information and links to their website and social media pages. There is a “contact” button with a phone number and/or email through which you can reach out.

Get familiar with your representatives by following them on social media, signing up for their emails/ newsletters, and browsing their website. You will be able to learn more about them, what they do, what they’re working on, important updates, and when their events are. By doing so, you will feel more prepared and comfortable when you choose to reach out about an issue.



# WAYS TO ADVOCATE

Advocacy can take many forms, from volunteering your time to directly engaging with elected officials. Below are various ways you can get involved and make an impact in your community.

## VOLUNTEERING

Support community programs and events by offering your time and skills. Many organizations operate with limited resources, so volunteers play a crucial role in helping them meet their goals. Volunteering also provides valuable firsthand experience with an issue and connects you with others who share your interests.

Examples of volunteer opportunities include:

- Assisting with food bank distributions
- Providing translation services at community meetings
- Supporting voter registration efforts
- Helping local organizations meet unmet needs by offering your skills and expertise



## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Many organizations and community groups already have established advocacy campaigns that you can join.

Ways to participate include:

- Attending a lobby day to meet with your representatives
- Inviting elected officials to an event
- Writing letters to representatives to express concerns or support for legislation
- Sending postcards to encourage community action
- Signing petitions to support a cause
- Calling or texting voters to remind them to participate in elections
- Joining a march, protest, or demonstration to raise awareness



You can also attend your representative's **town hall meetings or city council hearings**, where public officials discuss community issues. Meeting schedules are typically available on their official websites or social media pages.

## EDUCATION AND MOBILIZATION

Raising awareness is one of the most powerful ways to advocate. Sharing information with your family, friends, neighbors, and community groups can inspire more people to take action. This can be done informally—through conversations at home, on social media, or within your personal and professional networks. Mobilizing others strengthens your advocacy efforts and builds collective power.



## GET MEDIA'S ATTENTION

Media coverage is a powerful way to amplify your message and influence policymakers. Negative press can pressure officials to act, while positive stories can encourage them to support your cause.

To gain media attention, consider:

- Writing a letter to the editor of a local newspaper
- Submitting an op-ed to highlight an issue (e.g., "Thirst for Change—The Imperative to Preserve the Colorado River" op-ed in Newsweek written by Rachel Forbes, Conservation Network member was published and used to advocate for the protection of the Colorado River)
- Organizing a press conference
- Inviting journalists to attend and cover a community event



When officials attend advocacy events, media coverage can also help highlight their support and encourage further engagement.

## CALLING YOUR REPRESENTATIVES

Calling your elected officials is a direct and impactful way to advocate for an issue. Since these calls are often brief, it's important to communicate your message clearly and concisely.

Tips for an Effective Call:

- Prepare your message: Draft your key points in advance and practice if needed.
- Introduce yourself: State your name and the city/town where you live.
- Mention your affiliation (if applicable): If you're calling on behalf of an organization, let them know.
- Be specific: Clearly state the issue you're calling about and the action you'd like them to take. If applicable, mention a specific bill or policy.
- Share your personal story: Explain why this issue matters to you and how it affects your community.
- Provide your contact information: They may ask for your email to send updates on the issue.
- Leave a voicemail if necessary: If no one answers, don't hang up—leave a message with your full statement.

### SAMPLE PHONE SCRIPT

"Hi, my name is [Your Name], and I am a constituent from [City/State]."

I am calling to urge [Senator/ Representative's Name] to support [Bill/Policy Name].

[Briefly explain why this issue is important to you and how it impacts your community.]

I strongly encourage [Senator/ Representative's Name] to vote [Yes/ No] on [Bill/Policy Name].

Thank you for your time."







# ADVOCACY AT DIFFERENT LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT

## SUMMARY

The U.S. government is structured across multiple levels, including the federal government, state governments, tribal territories, unincorporated territories, and municipalities (counties, cities, or towns). While each level operates independently, they all share a common structure of three branches:

- **Executive** – Implements and enforces laws
- **Legislative** – Creates laws and budgets
- **Judicial** – Interprets and applies laws

This section will help you understand how each level of government functions, the key roles within them, and the best ways to advocate for your cause effectively.

## LOCAL ADVOCACY

State, county, and municipal governments vary in structure and authority, but they all play a critical role in shaping policies that impact your community. Engaging with local officials is one of the most effective ways to advocate for change since these offices are often more accessible than state or federal offices.

### KEY LOCAL OFFICIALS AND THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES

**Mayor:** Serves as the chief executive of the city, oversees local government operations, drafts budgets, appoints department heads, and represents the city.

**County or City Council:** Acts as the legislative body responsible for passing local laws and budgets, approving major projects, and planning infrastructure improvements.

**District Attorney:** Represents the state in criminal cases and makes prosecutorial decisions to uphold public safety.

**School Board:** Establishes educational policies, sets the district budget, approves curriculum, and funds school programs.

**County or City Clerk:** Manages local elections, oversees voter accessibility, and ensures election transparency.

## ADVOCACY AT A LOCAL LEVEL

Advocacy at the city or county level offers various opportunities to influence policies and legislation. Since council members and other local officials often live in the communities they serve, they are generally more accessible. You may even encounter them in everyday settings like parks or grocery stores!

### STEPS TO GET STARTED:

- **Identify your representatives** – Learn which district you live in and the names of your city or county council members.
- **Understand their schedules** – Many legislative sessions run year-round but have limited hours, so plan accordingly.
- **Prepare your message** – When reaching out, include:
  - Your stance on the issue
  - A personal story
  - Supporting arguments
  - A proposed action or solution

## WAYS TO ADVOCATE



**CALL OR EMAIL YOUR OFFICIALS:**  
Find their contact information on their official website.



**CIVIC ENGAGEMENT:**  
Attend town halls, community meetings, and public events (read [Bread for the World's](#) guidance on how to be engaging at public meetings).



**MEET THEM IN PERSON:**  
Schedule meetings with officials or their staff.



**TESTIFY ON A BILL:**  
Share your personal story at public hearings or committee meetings.

**Tip:** Many local council members have other jobs unless their role is full-time. Connecting with their staff can be an effective way to get your message across.





# STATE ADVOCACY

State governments function similarly to the federal government, with **Legislative, Executive, and Judicial** branches. This section focuses on the Legislative Branch, which is responsible for debating and passing state laws.

## STRUCTURE

Most states have a bicameral legislature, meaning it consists of two chambers:

- **State Senate (Upper House)** – Represents larger districts and has longer terms. Senators confirm gubernatorial appointments and oversee broad policy decisions.
- **State House of Representatives (Lower House)** – Represents smaller districts with shorter terms. Members can introduce tax-related legislation and initiate impeachment proceedings. (Note: Some states call this chamber the House of Delegates or the Assembly.)

Each chamber has various committees and subcommittees, delegations, caucuses, and leadership structure.

- Committees cover several issues including Budget, Education, the Environment, Finance, Judicial Proceedings, and Rules. Bills are initially introduced in these committees where they are debated and adopted.
- The Delegations include elected officials from specific counties. They include both State Senators and Representatives.
- Caucuses are bodies of elected officials that track bills of interest to members of certain communities.
- For leadership, The Senate has a President and the House has a Speaker.

## LEGISLATIVE SESSIONS

State legislatures convene for **limited periods** to pass laws. Depending on the state, sessions may last **60 to 90 days, occur annually, or even every other year**. It's crucial to know your state's legislative calendar to plan your advocacy efforts effectively.

## ADVOCACY AT A STATE LEVEL

Advocating at the state level can seem complex, but it provides significant opportunities to influence legislation. Because legislative sessions are often short, early engagement is key.

### STEPS TO GET STARTED:

- **Identify your legislators** – Find out which district you live in and who represents you in the State Senate and House.
- **Track legislative timelines** – Sessions move quickly, and some states limit the number of bills introduced, so advocacy should start before the session begins.
- **Prepare your message** – Clearly outline:
  - Your stance on the issue
  - A personal story
  - Supporting arguments
  - The specific action or solution you are proposing

## WAYS TO ADVOCATE



**CALL OR EMAIL YOUR LEGISLATIVE:**  
Find their contact information on their official website.



**CIVIC ENGAGEMENT:**  
Attend town halls, hearings, or advocacy day (read [Bread for the World's](#) guidance on how to be engaging at public meetings).



**MEET THEM IN PERSON:**  
Schedule meetings with legislators or their staff.



**TESTIFY ON A BILL:**  
Share your personal story or experience at committee hearings.

**Tip:** State legislators often have other jobs outside of the legislative session. Their staff members play a key role in shaping policy decisions, so building relationships with them can be highly effective.

The Local Community Advocacy section details a useful exercise called Power Mapping that can help you connect with elected officials.

Want to learn more about how state legislatures work? Visit [National Conference of State Legislatures](#) for state specific information.





# CONGRESS

## STRUCTURE & RESPONSIBILITIES

The **Legislative Branch** of the U.S. government is Congress, which consists of two chambers:

**House of Representatives** – 435 elected members representing districts in all 50 states, apportioned based on population. Additionally, there are **six non-voting members** representing:

- District of Columbia
- Puerto Rico
- Guam
- U.S. Virgin Islands
- American Samoa
- Northern Mariana Islands

**Senate** – 100 Senators, two per state. The **Vice President of the United States** serves as President of the Senate and casts a tie-breaking vote when needed.

U.S. Representatives serve two-year terms and U.S. Senators serve six-year terms.

The U.S. Congress is in session throughout the year, primarily in Washington, DC., with breaks for recess—usually a **month in August** and several shorter recesses throughout the year when lawmakers return to their home districts.

The legislative calendars, current bills, and session updates are found on the [US Congress Website](#).

## COMMITTEES AND LEADERSHIP

Congress is divided into committees that focus on specific policy areas. Bills are first introduced and debated in these committees before advancing to a vote. View [list of Committees, Commissions and Caucuses](#).

- Key Committees include Budget, Education, Finance, Judiciary, Ethics, Natural Resources, and Rules.
- Caucuses are **groups of lawmakers** that advocate for policies benefiting specific communities or causes.
- Leadership Roles:
  - **Senate:** Majority Leader (sets legislative agenda)
  - **House:** Speaker of the House (presides over House sessions)

## ADVOCACY IN CONGRESS

Advocating at the federal level allows you to influence national policies. While Members of Congress work in Washington, D.C., they regularly return to their home districts, offering opportunities to engage with them locally.

### STEPS TO GET STARTED:

- **Identify your Representatives** – Use the Find Your Member of Congress tool.
- **Track Their Calendar** – Monitor recess periods and district events for advocacy opportunities.
- **Prepare your message** – Clearly outline:
  - Your stance on the issue
  - A personal story or experience
  - Supporting arguments
  - A specific action or policy solution

## WAYS TO ADVOCATE



### CALL OR EMAIL YOUR REPRESENTATIVE:

Find their contact information on their official website.



### CIVIC ENGAGEMENT:

Attend their district town halls or events (read [Bread for the World's](#) guidance on how to be engaging at public meetings).



### MEET THEM IN PERSON:

Schedule meetings with elected officials or their staff.



### TESTIFY ON A BILL:

Provide written or verbal testimony at committee hearings.



## ADDITIONAL TIPS FOR SUCCESS

### 1. DO YOUR RESEARCH

- **Understand the Issue** – Read up on the policy, bill, or issue you’re advocating for. Use reliable sources such as:
  - [Congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov) – To track bills and legislative activity.
  - [Government Accountability Office \(GAO\)](https://www.gao.gov) – For reports on government performance and impact.
  - Your Representative’s Website – To see their voting record and stance on issues.
- **Know Who to Contact** – Members of Congress often specialize in specific areas. Contact the relevant committee members for stronger influence.



### 2. BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH CONGRESSIONAL STAFF

- **Staff are Key Gatekeepers** – Legislators rely heavily on their staff for policy guidance. Building a connection with a legislative aide can increase your influence.
- **Follow Up** – If you meet with a representative or their staff, send a thank-you email summarizing your key points and any agreed-upon next steps.



### 3. MAKE YOUR ASK CLEAR AND ACTIONABLE

- **Use the “One Ask” Rule** – Instead of overwhelming with multiple requests, focus on one clear action you want the legislator to take (e.g., “Vote YES on [Bill Name]”).
- **Personalize Your Message** – stories are more persuasive than statistics alone. Explain why this issue matters to YOU and your community.



### 4. LEVERAGE PUBLIC PRESSURE AND VISIBILITY

- **Use Social Media** – Tag your representatives on platforms like X (Twitter), Facebook, and Instagram to amplify your message. Many lawmakers actively engage online.
  - Example: “.@ [Rep/Senator’s Handle], I urge you to support [Bill Name] to protect our public lands. This impacts my community in [State/City]. #ActNow”
- **Write an Op-Ed or Letter to the Editor** – Publishing in local newspapers can grab lawmakers’ attention, especially if their constituents are reading it.
- **Join Advocacy Days & Coalitions** – Many national organizations host lobby days where advocates can meet directly with lawmakers. Find events through groups like:
  - [League of Conservation Voters](https://www.leagueofconservationvoters.org) (Environment)
  - [Unidos US](https://www.unidosus.org) (Latino Advocacy)
  - [Bread for the World](https://www.breadfortheworld.org) (Hunger & Poverty)



### 5. ATTEND CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS AND PUBLIC EVENTS

- **Make Your Voice Heard** – Hearings are public and often allow for written or verbal testimony.
- **Engage Locally** – Attend town halls, roundtables, and district meetings when your representatives return home. These smaller settings provide a great chance to interact directly.



# HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW

In the United States, all levels of government—Federal, State, and Local—are structured similarly, each with **three branches of government**, each playing a distinct role in upholding democracy:

- **Legislative Branch:** Creates, updates, or removes laws.
- **Executive Branch:** Enforces laws and manages government operations.
- **Judicial Branch:** Interprets laws and ensures they align with the Constitution.

This section focuses on the **Legislative Branch** and the law-making process. The **Legislature** (another term for the Legislative Branch) is typically a **bicameral body**, meaning it has **two chambers**: Senate (upper house) and House of Representatives (lower house).

## STEPS IN THE LAW-MAKING PROCESS

### 1. Bill Introduction

- A legislator drafts and introduces a bill in either chamber (House/Assembly or Senate).
- The bill is assigned a number and referred to a relevant **committee** for further review.

### 2. Committee Review & Amendments

- The assigned committee holds hearings, debates the bill, and may propose amendments.
- The committee votes on whether to move the bill forward. If approved, it proceeds to the full chamber for a vote.

### 3. Floor Debate & Vote

- The full chamber (House or Senate) debates the bill and votes on whether to pass it.
- If approved, the bill moves to the **second chamber**, where it follows the same process.

### 4. Final Approval by Both Chambers

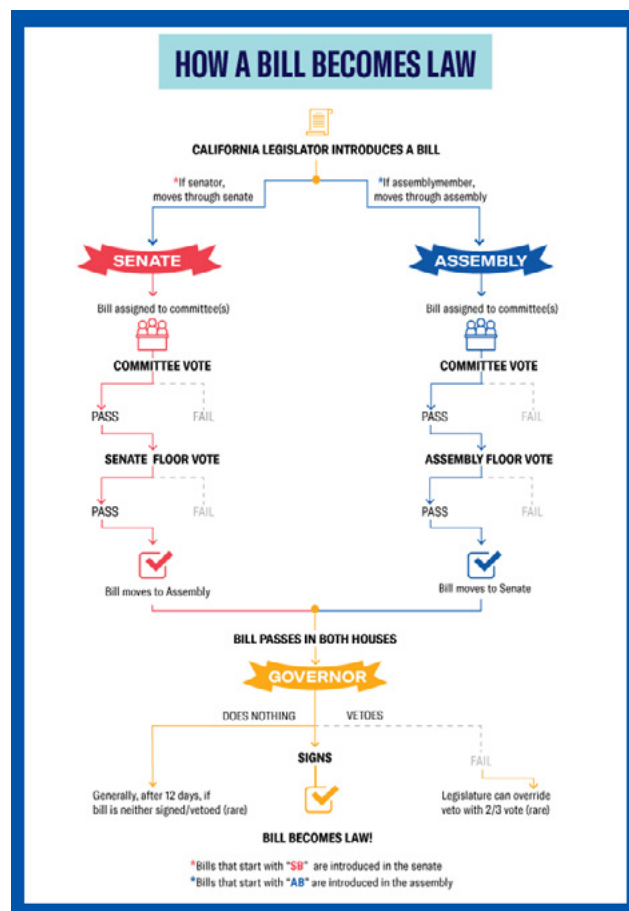
- If both the House and Senate pass identical versions of the bill, it moves to the **Executive Branch** (President or Governor).
- If there are differences between the two versions, they must be reconciled before final approval.

### 5. Executive Action: Sign, Veto, or Allow

- The **President (Federal)** or **Governor (State)** has three options:
- **Sign the bill into law**
- Do nothing (In some cases, the bill automatically becomes law after a set period.)
- Veto the bill (Reject it and return it to the Legislature with objections.)

### 6. Veto Override (If Necessary)

- If the Executive **vetoes** the bill, the Legislature can attempt to override the veto by **passing it again with a two-thirds majority** in both chambers.
- If successful, the bill becomes law despite the veto.



(Source: [ACLU CA Legislature](#))





# EXECUTIVE BRANCH

## STRUCTURE

The President of the United States serves as head of state and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, and **chief executive officer** responsible for enforcing laws passed by Congress. The President appoints the heads of Federal agencies, including members of the **Cabinet**, subject to Senate confirmation.

## EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES

The Executive Branch consists of multiple departments and agencies, each with its own mission, responsibilities, and authority to enforce and administer Federal laws. Below is an overview of the 15 Executive Departments and their roles:

[Dept. of Agriculture](#) (USDA) develops and implements policies on farming, food, and rural development. It includes 29 agencies, such as the Forest Service.

**Head:** Secretary of Agriculture

[Dept. of Commerce](#) promotes economic growth, job creation, and business opportunities in the U.S.

**Head:** Secretary of Commerce

[Dept. of Defense](#) (DOD) is the largest government agency, responsible for national security, military operations, and disaster reliefs.

**Head:** Secretary of Defense

[Dept. of Education](#) supports student achievement, improves education quality, and administers financial aid programs.

**Head:** Secretary of Education

[Dept. of Energy](#) (DOE) oversees national energy policy, energy research, and nuclear security..

**Head:** Secretary of Energy

[Dept. of Health and Human Services](#) (HHS) Protects public health, oversees Medicare & Medicaid, and administers the National Institutes of Health, the Food and Drug Administration, and the Centers for Disease Control.

**Head:** Secretary of Health and Human Services

[Dept. of Homeland Security](#) (DHS) Prevents terrorism, secures borders, and responds to national emergencies.

**Head:** Secretary of Homeland Security

[Dept. of Housing and Urban Development](#) (HUD) Addresses housing needs, enforces fair housing laws, and manages public housing programs.

**Head:** Secretary of Housing and Urban Development

[Dept. of the Interior](#) (DOI) manages national natural resources, wildlife, indigenous affairs and cultural heritage, and oversees land and water resources.

**Head:** Secretary of the Interior

[Dept. of Justice](#) (DOJ) Enforces Federal law, oversees national security threats, and includes 42 agencies, such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

**Head:** Attorney General

[Dept. of Labor](#) (DOL) Protects workers' rights, improves labor conditions, and promotes job opportunities.

**Head:** Secretary of Labor

[Dept. of State](#) Manages U.S. foreign policy, diplomacy, and international relations with nearly 190 countries.

**Head:** Secretary of State

[Dept. of Transportation](#) (DOT) Oversees the nation's transportation infrastructure, ensuring safety and efficiency.

**Head:** Secretary of Transportation

[Dept. of the Treasury](#) Manages Federal finances, produces currency, collects taxes, and ensures financial system stability.

**Head:** Secretary of the Treasury

[Dept. of Veterans Affairs](#) Administers benefits, healthcare, and assistance programs for military veterans and their families.

**Head:** Secretary of Veterans Affairs

## INDEPENDENT FEDERAL AGENCIES

The executive departments are made up of agencies and administrations to carry out their work and mission. However, some agencies are independent and aren't under any of the executive departments.

[Environmental Protection Agency](#) (EPA) works to protect human health and the environment by ensuring clean air, land, and water through regulations and enforcement.

**Head:** EPA Administrator

[Office of Management and Budget](#) (OMB) assists the President in developing the annual budget proposal and oversees budget execution.

**Head:** OMB Director

[Small Business Administration](#) (SBA) supports small businesses with resources, funding, and advisory services to help them start, grow, and recover.

**Head:** SBA Administrator



## OTHER CABINET MEMBERS

In addition to the heads of the **15 Executive Departments**, the **Cabinet** includes other key officials who advise the President:

- Director of the Central Intelligence Agency
- Director of National Intelligence
- U.S. Trade Representative
- Vice President
- White House Chief of Staff
- Ambassador to the United Nations
- Chair of the Council of Economic Advisors
- Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy
- Special Presidential Envoy for Climate

View more information on the current members of the [Cabinet](#).

## ADVOCACY IN THE EXECUTIVE ADMINISTRATION

### CONTACTING THE WHITE HOUSE

You can share your concerns, ideas, or advocacy efforts with the White House through multiple channels. The **Office of Public Engagement** reviews public comments, and a selection is presented to the President daily. View more information [here](#). To learn how to tailor your message, you can also refer to the “Crafting Your Story” section in “Meeting with Policymakers.”

#### [EMAIL](#)

#### CALL:

Comments: 202-456-1111  
Switchboard: 202-456-1414  
TTY/TTD (for hearing impaired):  
202-456-6213  
Visitor’s Office: 202-456-2121

#### WRITE A LETTER:

Include your return address on your letter and envelope, as well as your email address. Send your letter to the full address of the White House below:

The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

#### Sample Letter:

*Dear President [Last Name],*

*I am writing to you today to ask you to take more immediate action on the lack of affordable housing. The cost of houses rises every day and the housing market has become so competitive which makes owning property seem unattainable. Renting an apartment is not cheap either making it difficult to save to ever have the opportunity to afford a house. To add on to these challenges, the cost of living increases but our wages stay the same. This affects me especially because I still make monthly payments for my student loans which is almost like paying another rent. I would like to move our family of five out of our two-bedroom apartment so we can have more space but as of now it seems unattainable. I would like to hear what your plan is to making housing more affordable.*

*Sincerely,*

## ENGAGING WITH EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND FEDERAL AGENCIES

Federal agencies and independent agencies develop regulations and policies that directly affect communities. There are multiple ways to advocate before policies and regulations are finalized.

### 1. FINDING THE RIGHT AGENCY

Each department has a **contact page** listing agencies, bureaus, and offices relevant to specific issues. You can typically find:

- Phone numbers
- Email addresses
- Online contact forms
- Mailing addresses

### 2. SUBMITTING PUBLIC COMMENTS

Agencies often **seek public input** before finalizing regulations. During the public comment period, you can:

- Share your thoughts on proposed policies
- Suggest alternative solutions
- Explain how the policy impacts your community

**How to submit comments:**

- **Electronically** via [Regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov) (preferred)
- **By mail** (check agency-specific instructions)

**Tip:** Look for agency-hosted **webinars, fact sheets, or FAQs** for more information on proposed regulations.

### 3. ATTENDING PUBLIC MEETINGS & HEARINGS

Agencies may hold **public hearings** on proposed regulations, offering opportunities for direct engagement.

- You can provide **oral statements or written testimony**.
- **Registration** may be required in advance.
- Meetings can be **held virtually or in-person** across the country.

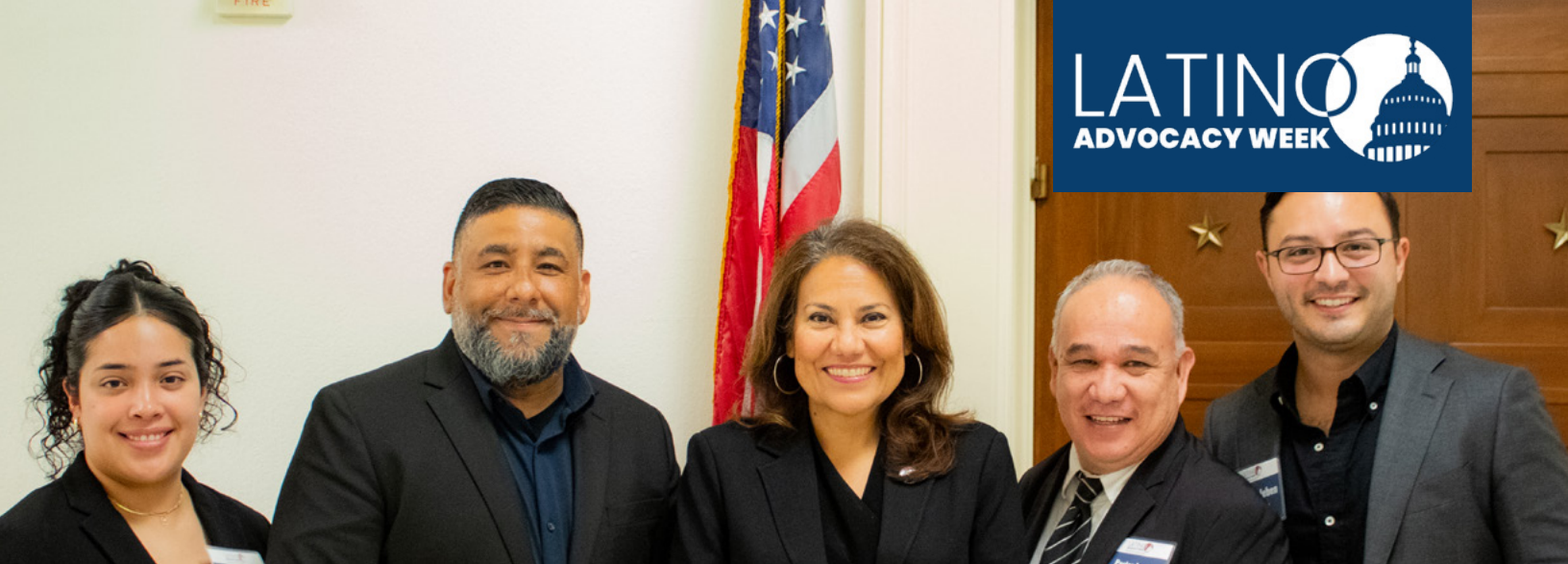
### HISPANIC ACCESS FOUNDATION SUCCESS STORY:

In 2017, 27 national parks and monuments across the United States were issued to be reviewed to significantly shrink or entirely remove the protections to the land attributed to the National Monuments. As part of their formal review process, the U.S. Department of Interior announced a public comment period. In response to this, the Hispanic Access Foundation launched the Latinos for Heritage campaign to mobilize Latinos to engage through this review process by submitting comments. The campaign had a website with information about the monuments as well as drafted comments people could follow to guide their comment submission. Latinos were encouraged to share their story and why national parks and monuments are important to them, as well as engage their networks to also submit comments. By bringing awareness to this issue, and through partnerships and social media initiatives, the participants of the campaign submitted over 50,000 comments!



This massive engagement helped ensure Latino voices were represented in conservation policy discussions.





# MEETING WITH POLICYMAKERS

## SUMMARY

Engaging directly with policymakers is a powerful way to advocate for your cause. This section provides guidance on scheduling a meeting with your representative (or their staff), crafting a compelling advocacy message that blends storytelling with data, and preparing for an effective in-person meeting. Whether you're advocating individually, as a family (kids are welcome!), or as part of a larger group, you'll find practical tips on drafting an advocacy plan, presenting your case, and proposing solutions. You can find learn who your representatives are on the USA.gov website [here](#).

## HOW TO SET UP A MEETING

There are two ways to set up a meeting with your representative:

### 1. Call their office

- Introduce yourself as a constituent and request a meeting.
- The office will guide you to the appropriate staff member for scheduling
- This works best for local and state offices.

### 2. Email or complete a contact form

- Visit your representative's website and look for a "Request a Meeting" option.
- Some offices require filling out a contact form that is automatically directed to the scheduler.
- This is the best option for federal offices. as they have both a Washington, D.C., and district office. Specify your preferred meeting location.

When requesting a meeting, include:

- Your name(s) and contact details
- The number of attendees (if meeting as a group) and a designated point of contact
- Zip Code/ address to confirm district residency
- Date/ time preference (offer multiple options)
- Purpose of the meeting (mention specific issues or legislation, if applicable)

# PREPARING TO MEET WITH YOUR REPRESENTATIVE

## BEFORE THE MEETING

- Research Your Representative
- Find their headshot so you can recognize them.
- Read their biography to identify common ground.
- Check their committee assignments—these influence their legislative power.
- Review their voting record on relevant issues.
- Identify any bills they support or sponsor.

Useful resources: Their official website, Wikipedia, Ballotpedia, Bills, and Open Secrets.

## Assign group roles

- **Leader:** Opens the meeting and introduces attendees.
- **Note-taker:** Records key points and follow-up actions.
- **Materials handler:** Provides handouts (letters, postcards, fact sheets, etc.).

## Dress for Impact

- Wearing an organization's t-shirt, button, or sticker helps reinforce your message.
- If relevant, wear attire that represents your profession (e.g., nurses in scrubs).

## DAY OF THE MEETING

### Plan Ahead

- Arrive early to allow time for security screening.
- Bring a valid ID and avoid prohibited items (liquids, weapons, etc.).
- Have the office's contact information handy in case of last-minute changes.
- Check in with the Staff Assistant at the front desk and show your appointment confirmation.

### Be Prepared

- Bring a notepad to take notes.
- Provide printed materials to leave behind (fact sheets, letters, postcards).
- If meeting in person, organize materials in folders for easy distribution

## MEETING WITH STAFFERS

You may meet with a member of the legislative staff who is responsible for the issue you will be discussing. This can be beneficial since they advise the representative on policy decisions and may help draft legislation.

Common staff position include:

- **Chief of Staff** - Oversees the office and serves as the top political advisor
- **Legislative Director** - Manages legislative initiatives and strategies and supervises policy staff
- **Communications Director** - Handles media, speeches, and messaging.
- **Legislative Assistant** - Specializes in specific policy areas, monitors bills and drafts statements.
- **Executive Assistant/Scheduler** - Manages the representative's calendar and meeting requests.
- **Staff Assistant** - Provides administrative support and responds to constituent inquiries.

## TIPS

- Offices receive many requests—if you don't get a response in a week, send a polite follow-up email.
- If directed to another staff member, don't take it personally. They want your concerns to reach the right person.
- The same process applies when inviting a representative to an event in their district.





# MEETING FORMAT

When meeting with representatives, constituents advocate for issues that matter to them. These meetings typically last **20-25 minutes**, so it's crucial to stay on track and make the most of your time. Representatives often have back-to-back meetings or may be called away for a vote, so be prepared to start promptly and adapt if the meeting is cut short.

## STRUCTURE OF THE MEETING

### Introductions (Keep It Brief)

Each group member should introduce themselves, including:

- Their **name** and **organization** (if applicable).
- Their **city/district** to emphasize their local connection.
- The **reason for the meeting** and its personal significance.

### Share Your Story

- Make it personal and relevant to the issue at hand.

### Present Your Issue & Call to Action (Most Important Part)

Clearly state what you are asking the representative to do. Common calls to action include:

- **Informing** them about an issue affecting you or your community.
- **Urging** them to vote for/against a specific bill.
- **Thanking** them for actions they've taken, such as sponsoring beneficial legislation.

### Engage in Dialogue

- Be prepared for questions—it's okay if you don't have all the answers. Offer to follow up with additional information.
- Ask the office about their current priorities and offer your group's support or resources if relevant.

### Provide Materials

- Bring fact sheets or other relevant materials to leave behind.
- If you have gifts, handouts, or visuals, present them **at the end** to avoid distractions.

### Closing the Meeting

- **Thank** them for their time. Always remain polite and professional.
- If you didn't meet with the representative directly, ask if they are available for a **photo**—it never hurts to ask!
- **Exchange contact information**—request a business card to follow up later.
- **Send a follow-up** email thanking them for the meeting, restating key points, and expressing your interest in staying in touch. You can also tag them in social media posts or share photos, as their office may want to repost.



## CRAFTING YOUR STORY

If you are meeting as a group, be mindful of time so everyone has time to share. Keep your story concise yet impactful to ensure your message is heard.

Use this simple framework to structure your story:

### BACKGROUND

Provide context about yourself and how this issue affects your district. Consider including details such as:

- **Your location** (city, district, community ties).
- **Your employment status** or industry.
- **Your family situation** and any relevant personal factors.

### ISSUE

Explain the specific problem you're facing. While the issue may affect many people, focus on your **unique perspective** and lived experience.

### SOLUTION

Clearly state what you're advocating for. What action do you need your representative to take to help resolve this issue?

## AN EXAMPLE

As a working parent in [your city/state], I've always strived to provide for my family, but rising costs for housing, childcare, and basic necessities have made it increasingly difficult. Last year, the expanded Child Tax Credit (CTC) provided critical financial relief, helping me cover rent, school expenses, and groceries for my two children. However, when the expanded CTC expired, my family—and millions of others—lost a vital financial lifeline. With housing costs soaring and wages not keeping pace with inflation, families like mine are struggling to stay afloat. I'm here today to urge Congress to permanently expand the Child Tax Credit and support working families. Restoring this program would lift millions of children out of poverty and give parents like me the stability we need to invest in our children's future. I hope I can count on your support for this essential legislation.





## SAMPLE LETTER TO REPRESENTATIVE

[Your Name]  
[Your Address]  
[City, State, ZIP Code]  
[Your Email]  
[Your Phone Number]  
[Date]

The Honorable [Representative's Name]  
[Office Address]  
[City, State, ZIP Code]

Subject: Support for [Policy Issue or Legislation Name]

Dear [Representative's Last Name],

My name is [Your Name], and I am a [your role: parent, student, worker, community advocate, constituent, etc.] from [Your City/State]. I am writing to express my strong support for [specific policy or legislation, e.g., the expansion of the Child Tax Credit, affordable housing initiatives, student loan relief, climate action, etc.]. This issue is deeply important to me, my family, and our community.

[Tell Your Personal Story – Explain how this issue affects you, your family, or your community. Keep it concise, authentic, and impactful. Example:

"As a working parent, I have struggled with the rising cost of childcare and basic necessities. When the expanded Child Tax Credit was in place, it provided crucial financial relief, allowing me to cover rent and essential expenses. However, when it expired, my family—and millions of others—lost critical support."]

The continuation of [specific policy or legislation] would make a significant difference by [explain the benefits: helping families afford essentials, improving public health, addressing climate change, expanding job opportunities, etc.]. I urge you to support and advocate for [policy or bill name] to ensure that families like mine—and so many others—can thrive.

I appreciate your time and commitment to serving our community. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further and learn about your stance on this issue. Please feel free to contact me at [your email] or [your phone number].

Thank you for your time and leadership. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,  
[Your Name]  
[Your Address]  
[City, State, ZIP Code]

## ADVOCATING WITH KIDS & YOUTH

As a parent or guardian, your role in advocacy is invaluable—and you don't have to leave your children out of the process! Children are constituents too, and representatives often enjoy meeting young advocates. Teaching kids about advocacy early on empowers them to use their voices for change.

Ways to Include Kids in Advocacy:

### Prepare Them in Advance

Explain the purpose of the meeting, who they'll be meeting, and why advocacy matters. Kids are naturally curious, and understanding the significance of advocacy can shape how they perceive challenges and solutions in their community.



### Encourage Kids to Introduce Themselves

Even a simple introduction—stating their name, age, grade level, and school—helps personalize your message. If they're too young to introduce themselves, you can do it for them!

### Make Them Part of Your Story

Children's experiences can be a powerful part of your advocacy. For example:

*"In our community, access to healthcare is limited, and as a parent, I've seen firsthand how this affects children's well-being. Every parent wants their child to be healthy, but when medical care is unaffordable or clinics are overcrowded, that dream feels out of reach. I've had to make difficult choices between paying bills and taking my child to the doctor, and I worry about what would happen if we faced a serious health issue."*

### Help Them Practice & Participate

If they're old enough, kids can prepare simple talking points and even present a short statement during the meeting. Their future is at stake too!

### Keep Them Engaged

During in-person meetings, assign kids small roles like listening, taking notes, or handing out materials. If they get restless, bring along quiet activities like books or coloring pages.

### Record a Message in Advance

If attending the meeting is difficult due to school or other commitments, have your child record a short video asking the representative a question or sharing their perspective. You can play the video during the meeting or share it on social media with your call to action.

### Use Creativity to Advocate

Encourage kids to write thank-you notes to representatives or create drawings of what they want their ideal community to look like—such as more parks, safer schools, or better public transportation. These can be mailed to elected officials along with a written call to action.

### Utilize Kid-Friendly Advocacy Tools

For children writing letters, **Kid Governor** offers easy-to-follow [templates](#) that help young advocates express their thoughts. Check out [Kid Governor](#) for additional kid-friendly resources on community issues and civic engagement.





# DIGITAL ADVOCACY

## SUMMARY

Advocacy is no longer limited to in-person meetings—digital tools provide powerful ways for individuals and communities to engage with policymakers remotely. This section outlines key digital advocacy methods, including virtual meetings, social media, email campaigns, petitions, and more. You'll also find best practices for effectively advocating online and tips for identifying and avoiding misinformation.

## INTRODUCTION

The shift to virtual engagement—accelerated by the pandemic—has changed the way advocates interact with policymakers. While internet access remains a challenge for some, digital platforms have made advocacy more accessible for those who can connect. Many government agencies and congressional offices continue to offer virtual meetings, allowing individuals to participate without the need for travel.

Through various digital tools, communities can amplify their voices and engage with decision-makers. Below are some key ways to advocate online.



## VIRTUAL “FLY-INS” OR LOBBY DAYS

Many organizations host “fly-ins,” “lobby days,” or “advocacy days”—coordinated events where advocates meet with policymakers to discuss important issues. Traditionally, fly-ins take place in Washington, DC, with participants traveling from across the country to meet with Members of Congress. However, with the rise of virtual engagement, these meetings now occur online, making it easier for more people to participate.

### WHAT IS A LOBBY DAY?

Lobby days (also called advocacy days) are a form of grassroots lobbying where a group of individuals collectively advocate for a specific policy, funding, or legislative action. The term “lobby” originates from historical meetings between legislators and advocates in government building lobbies. These advocacy efforts can take place at all levels of government—local, state, and federal.

For guidance on structuring these meetings, refer to the **Meeting with Policymakers** section of this toolkit.

## TIPS FOR VIRTUAL MEETINGS WITH POLICYMAKERS

### KNOW THE PLATFORM

Meetings may take place via Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or other video conferencing tools. Make sure to download and test the required platform ahead of time.

### CHECK YOUR TECHNOLOGY

Ensure your device’s camera and microphone are working. Test your settings before the meeting to avoid technical difficulties—especially if you share your device with others.

### ELIMINATE DISTRACTIONS

Check your virtual background, close unnecessary tabs, and minimize background noise. Unexpected filters or interruptions can happen to anyone—yes, even attorneys and policymakers!

### ENGAGE WITH CONFIDENCE

Treat virtual meetings as seriously as in-person meetings. Speak clearly, be concise, and stay on topic.

### MIND YOUR BACKGROUND

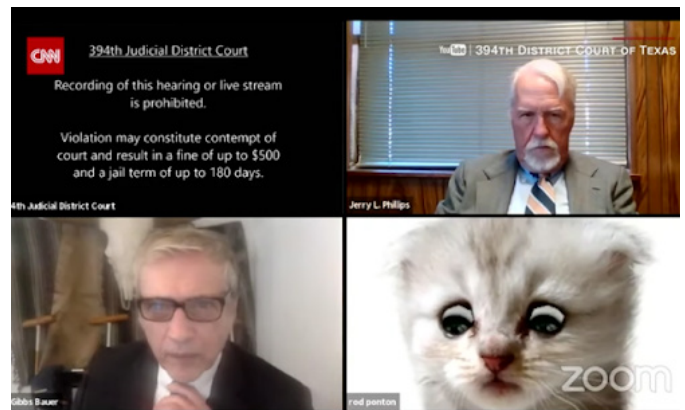
If you’ll be on camera, choose a clean, professional setting. Position yourself in front of a neutral background, such as a plain wall, to minimize distractions. Avoid busy or cluttered spaces, and be mindful of people or objects that may appear behind you.

### CONTROL NOISE LEVELS

Find a quiet space where background noise won’t interfere with the conversation. If possible, use headphones with a built-in microphone for better sound quality.

### MANAGE YOUR MICROPHONE & CAMERA

Always double-check whether your microphone and camera are on or off at the appropriate times. Mute yourself when not speaking to reduce background noise, and be mindful of accidental unmuting or video disruptions.







## VIRTUAL TOWN HALLS

Town halls provide a platform for open dialogue between citizens and government officials. These events allow elected representatives to hear from constituents, address pressing issues, and engage in discussion. Town halls may focus on specific topics with expert panelists, but officials generally remain open to questions on other matters as well.

As an advocate, you can participate in town halls to voice concerns, ask questions, and highlight issues affecting your community. Additionally, advocates can organize and request town halls in response to urgent matters, urging elected officials to directly engage with constituents.

While traditionally held in person, many town halls continue to be conducted virtually. Stay informed by checking your representative's website and social media for upcoming events, including details on how to register. Since virtual events often have large audiences, **some require pre-registration for questions** to ensure everyone has an opportunity to participate.

## PETITIONS

Petitions are a powerful tool to mobilize communities, amplify concerns, and push for action. By gathering signatures, petitions demonstrate public support for a cause and put pressure on decision-makers. Common petition goals include:

- Demanding legislative action or policy changes
- Holding government officials or agencies accountable
- Raising awareness and advocating for justice

To **increase the impact of a petition**, advocates should actively share it through social media, email campaigns, and community networks. Additionally, many advocacy organizations maintain active petitions on their websites—be sure to explore and sign relevant ones to help push issues forward.



## SIGN-ON LETTERS

A **sign-on letter** is a collective statement of support, often signed by multiple individuals or organizations, to demonstrate broad backing for a cause. These letters vary in scope and theme—for example, **environmental groups, healthcare advocates, and faith-based organizations** may each submit unique sign-on letters for the same issue to emphasize different perspectives.

### WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN SIGNING A LETTER:

#### READ THE LETTER CAREFULLY

Sign-on letters are often published publicly, so ensure you fully agree with the message and demands before adding your name.

#### UNDERSTAND THE ORGANIZERS AND THEIR PRIORITIES

Learn about the group leading the effort, their mission, and their stance on related issues.

#### EVALUATE THE CALL TO ACTION

Consider whether the policy recommendations align with your views and whether edits are possible if needed. Some letters may allow for revisions, but major changes may not be feasible.

#### HOW TO SIGN THE LETTER

Most sign-on letters are collected digitally through Google Forms or similar platforms, making it easy to submit your name, title, and organizational affiliation without needing printed signatures.

### ORGANIZING A SIGN-ON LETTER:

Coordinating a sign-on letter requires careful planning and collaboration, so it would be helpful to have a team of people to rely on. You can work with partnering organizations or individuals to determine the answers to these questions. To maximize its impact, consider these key steps:

#### 1. DEFINE THE PURPOSE

- What is the goal? (E.g., urge legislation, call attention to an issue, express frustration, etc.)
- Who is the target audience? (E.g., local representatives, Congress, federal agencies, the President)
- Who should sign the letter? (E.g., individuals, advocacy organizations, faith leaders)
- What key issues and policy demands should be included?

#### 2. DRAFT THE LETTER & ORGANIZE SIGNATURES

- Use **shared platforms like Google Docs** to allow collaboration.
- Develop an outreach strategy—will you **send personalized emails, use social media, or coordinate through advocacy groups**?
- Create a **Google Form** to collect signatures and signatory details (e.g., name, title, organization).

#### 3. COORDINATE & AMPLIFY

- Assign team members to tasks such as **sending reminders, following up with signers, and managing outreach**.
- Develop a **social media and media strategy** to expand reach.
- Plan for **delivering the letter**—will it be sent via email, delivered in person, or both?

#### 4. FOLLOW UP & ENGAGE MEDIA

- **Follow up with the recipient's office** to track progress and establish ongoing communication.
- **Engage the media** by delivering the letter publicly and posting photos or updates on social media.
- Consider writing an **op-ed** to highlight the issue and put pressure on policymakers (see the “Ways to Advocate” section for details).

## SAMPLE SIGN ON LETTER:

Below is an example from Por La Creación's National 30x30 Sign on Letter:

-----  
[Date]

President Joe Biden  
Chair Brenda Mallory  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Debra Haaland  
Secretary of Interior  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear President Joe Biden, Chair Brenda Mallory, and Secretary Debra Haaland,

As we continue to live through this pandemic, the Administration's America the Beautiful initiative to protect 30% of the country's land, waters, and ocean offers an unprecedented opportunity to provide a healthy environment not only for America's beautiful landscapes, but also for our communities to care for God's creation.

...

[Por La Creación Faith-Based Alliance](#), which unites Latino faith leaders to develop stewards of God's creation, supports the Administration's America the Beautiful initiative because it recognizes that taking care of the natural environment is important for our spiritual and psychosocial well-being. On behalf of the faith community in the Administration, we respectfully encourage the Administration to listen to voices of our faith community through this letter.

**As a community, we are united in asking you to advance the America the Beautiful initiative with the following priorities and considerations:**

...

We invite decision-makers to immerse themselves in our communities and hear from the community directly. To experience what we have experienced and see the beauty and the damage to our environment from our perspective. Take a walk with us and explore the areas we call home. Bringing communities of color to the table with our unique perspective will give further insight. We appreciate the Administration's fast action in introducing the America the Beautiful initiative. We hope to see the Administration work closely with our communities to reach the 30x30 goal.

Signed,

[all signers listed]

-----

## EMAILS

Email outreach is a powerful tool for fundraising and mobilizing support. Whether you're raising funds for school supplies, food drives, housing assistance, or community aid, personalized emails can help engage your network in your cause.

Asking for donations may feel uncomfortable, but remember: advocating for your community is important, and the worst that can happen is someone says no. Even small contributions add up when many people participate.

### TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE FUNDRAISING EMAILS:

- **Start with people you know** – Friends, family, and colleagues are more likely to contribute.
- **Clearly state the purpose** – Explain **why the funds are needed, how they will be used, and who they will benefit.**
- **Make donating easy** – Provide clear instructions or links to donation platforms.
- **Follow up** – After using the funds, update donors on how their contributions made an impact to maintain trust and encourage future support.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a **powerful tool** for advocacy, allowing you to reach a broad audience, share information, and engage with decision-makers in real time.

You can use your platform to:

- **Share factual information** about your cause and its importance.
- **Engage with policymakers** – Follow your representatives' official and campaign accounts to stay updated. Many hold **Facebook Live Q&A sessions**—turn on notifications to join in.
- **Tag officials and media** – Directly tag representatives, community leaders, or media outlets to amplify your message. Social media algorithms **prioritize engagement**, so interactions increase visibility.

### SAMPLE TWEET: CALLING ON ELECTED OFFICIALS



### TIPS FOR MAXIMIZING SOCIAL MEDIA ADVOCACY

- **X** – Use relevant or trending hashtags to increase reach (ensure your account is public).
- **Facebook** – Join groups aligned with your cause to engage in conversations and share updates.
- **Instagram** – Tag larger organizations or public figures to expand visibility (ensure your account is public for broader discovery).
- **LinkedIn** – Highlight a compelling statistic or personal story in your LinkedIn post to drive engagement and inspire action on your advocacy topic.





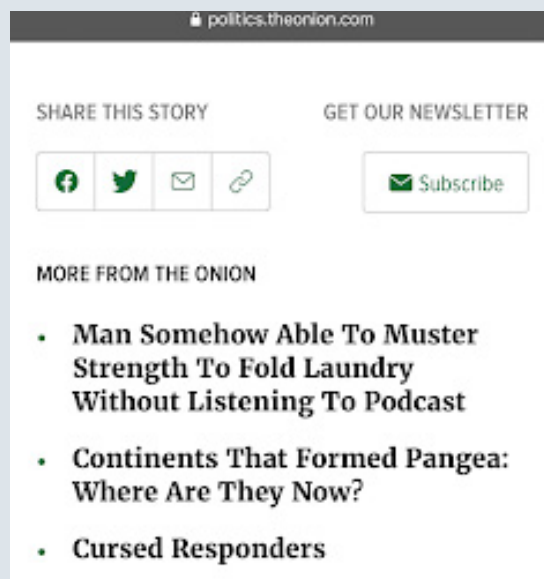
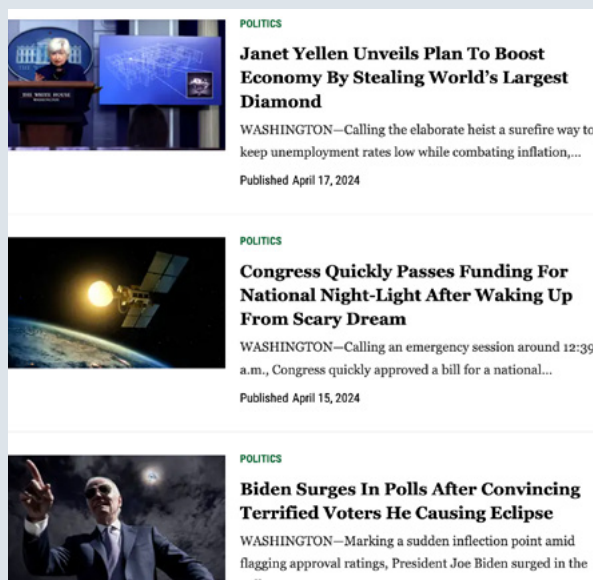
## IDENTIFYING MISINFORMATION

We live in the “age of information”—but also the “era of misinformation.” With more content being produced daily than in thousands of years of human history, it’s crucial to distinguish facts from falsehoods.

### QUICK GUIDE TO IDENTIFYING FAKE NEWS:

- **Consider the source** – Headlines can be misleading (clickbait). Read the full article before sharing.
- **Verify the author** – Research the author and their affiliations to check credibility.
- **Check the website** – Fake news sites often imitate legitimate ones (e.g., [www.abcnews.net.co](http://www.abcnews.net.co) is not ABC News). Be wary of sensational stories.
- **Consult experts** – For reliable information, refer to trusted institutions (e.g., CDC for public health updates).
- **Beware of satire and bias** – Some articles are intended as satire (*The Onion*) or push personal/political biases. Critical stories about politicians or organizations you oppose may not always be accurate.
- By practicing media literacy, you can amplify credible advocacy efforts and ensure your message is based on facts.

## EXAMPLES OF FAKE NEWS AND SATIRE





# RESEARCHING POLICY

## SUMMARY

Researching policy on your own may seem challenging, but don't let it stop you! The more you do it, the easier it becomes. This section provides a **roadmap** for researching policy, including key steps to follow, useful websites for finding state and federal legislation, and guidance on how to assess policies based on trusted organizations' ratings. Additionally, you'll find **simplified definitions** of important legislative terms to help you navigate policy research with confidence.

## INTRODUCTION

Policy research can feel overwhelming due to complex language and legal jargon. While advocacy organizations often simplify legislative text for the public, conducting your own research gives you **direct access to primary sources and allows for independent analysis**.

If you're new to policy research, don't worry—it **gets easier with practice!** To support your learning, we've compiled **step-by-step guidance** and **key resources** to help you quickly find and understand legislation.

## WHERE TO START

### 1. Use Online Legislative Tracking Tools

A great place to begin your research is [BillTrack](#), a powerful search tool for **state and federal legislation**. Here, you can find:

- **How representatives voted** on specific bills
- **Bills they've sponsored** and their legislative priorities
- **Committees they serve on** and their roles
- **Contact information for staff members**
- **Summaries and current status** of legislation

**Pro Tip:** Many bills never become law. When researching, check the **progress bar** on a bill's page to see whether it has passed committee stages, received a vote, or stalled in the process.

### 2. Use Scorecards & Report Cards

If you want to assess how elected officials align with specific issues, look at **policy scorecards** published by advocacy organizations. These tools:

- Rate representatives based on their **voting history**
- Indicate whether organizations **support or oppose** key bills
- Provide **lists of bills** relevant to different policy areas

This research can help you **understand where lawmakers stand on the issues that matter to you** and guide your advocacy efforts.



## TERMS TO KNOW

**AMENDMENT:** A proposed change to a bill, resolution, or another official document.

**BILL:** A proposal for a new law. The name depends on where it originates. The title may start with either "H.R." or "S." (H.R. = House of Representatives, S.B. = Senate).

**CONGRESS:** A two-year legislative session in which Members of Congress serve. For example, the 119th Congress began in 2025.

**COMMITTEE/ SUBCOMMITTEE:** A panel of Representatives or Senators responsible for reviewing, revising, and overseeing legislation before it advances in the legislative process.

**COMMITTEE CHAIR:** A member of the majority party who leads a committee, sets its agenda, and manages its resources.

**HEARING:** A formal committee meeting where witnesses provide testimony on proposed legislation, executive branch actions, or public policy issues.

**RESOLUTION:** A formal written statement that expresses the opinions, views, or intentions. Resolutions do not have the force of law but can serve symbolic and political purposes.

- In 2024, Congresswoman Nanette Diaz Barragán (CA-44) introduced H.Res. 1464, a resolution recognizing the importance of Latino engagement in outdoor recreation and conservation. The resolution supports the designation of the third week of September as "Latino Conservation Week," shifting from the previous recognition in July. The resolution highlights the contributions of the Latino community to environmental protection and emphasizes the need for equitable access to green spaces, particularly in communities disproportionately affected by pollution and climate change

**SPONSOR:** The legislator who introduces a bill. The first-named legislator is the official sponsor, while others are listed as co-sponsors.

For a full glossary of legislative terms, visit [Congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov)





# Hispanic Access Foundation

Hispanic Access Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that connects Latinos with partners and opportunities improving lives and creating an equitable society. Our vision is that all Hispanics throughout the U.S. enjoy good physical health, a healthy natural environment, a quality education, economic success and civic engagement in their communities with the sum improving the future of America. For more information, visit [www.hispanicaccess.org](http://www.hispanicaccess.org).

**[WWW.HISPANICACCESS.ORG](http://WWW.HISPANICACCESS.ORG)**