



## **Toolkit: Organizing elected officials to stop US climate obstruction**

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### **Overview**

From Hurricane Maria's devastation of Puerto Rico to the wildfire smoke choking the American West, the impacts of climate change are here and impossible to ignore. Yet in this moment, the Trump administration, at the behest of the fossil fuel industry, is intent on delaying and blocking climate justice. In fact, even as Trump moves to pull the U.S. out of the Paris Agreement, his administration plans to continue to bully other countries to undermine progress at the international climate treaty negotiations.

That's why we're standing in solidarity with our allies around the globe to expose U.S. interference on behalf of Big Polluters, demand the U.S. stand down, and ensure the world can advance people-first climate policy. Already, more than 100,000 people joined the call for the U.S. to stand down in advance of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Conference of the Parties (COP23) of the global climate treaty in Germany in November. Now, we're escalating the call by organizing elected officials at all levels from around the country to amplify and bolster our voices. By organizing your elected officials to join the call, you're helping stand up to the U.S. government's bullying on the international stage, supporting countries around the world who know a different kind of climate policy is possible, and laying the groundwork to advance true climate justice.

This toolkit is designed to give you everything you need to move your local elected officials to sign on to support this campaign. We are here to support you on questions, advice, materials, and anything else! Just email [ActionLeague@CorporateAccountability.org](mailto:ActionLeague@CorporateAccountability.org) or call 617.695.2525 and ask to speak with an Action League organizer.

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Note: We are also preparing a set of Frequently Asked Questions to help answer any of your or your elected officials' questions. Please contact us to get a copy!

## **Section 1: Steps for recruiting elected officials to sign on to the campaign**

### **Step 1: Make a list of local elected officials to reach out to.**

- The #1 principle is: Cast a wide net! We welcome anyone who holds elected office to sign on to the letter. There are a lot of people who represent you politically, from your school board to your town council to your mayor to your state representatives and right on up to your governor and U.S. congressional delegation. If you're feeling unsure of whom to reach out to, give us a call and we'll help you brainstorm!

### **Step 2: Power map your elected officials (What is a "power map"? See section 2).**

- For each person on your list, create a mini power map.
- You may already have easy access to some elected officials. If so, get started reaching out to them right away! If not, take this step to figure out how you can best reach them.

### **Step 3: Reach out!**

- For many, you'll want to start with an email asking them to sign on to the letter or to meet up to discuss signing on. Then, you'll likely need to follow up with a phone call.
- In some cases, especially for more prominent elected officials, you'll need to meet with them or their staff in person. They are worth it!
- For more prominent elected officials, you may need to do some local organizing to show that a large number of constituents want to see them speaking out about this issue. See section 3 for more.

### **Step 4: Follow up, follow up... and follow up.**

- As the old adage says, 90 percent of organizing is follow-up. These days, many people don't respond to emails or voicemails—not because they don't care or aren't interested, but just because they are busy! Don't be deterred by lack of response; pick up the phone and follow up.
- Similarly, if you've had a conversation with someone and they said they'd think about it or needed more information, make sure you follow up with them soon after to seal the deal. A confirmation call or text (especially if a staffer said they'd talk to the elected official on a certain day) is always a good idea to check in.

### **Step 5: Report back to us.**

- Whenever you get a "yes" to sign on, make sure you let us know! Ideally, your elected officials will fill out the [online form](#). If they've signed a paper letter (see below), make sure you scan and email it to [ActionLeague@CorporateAccountability.org](mailto:ActionLeague@CorporateAccountability.org) or mail it to us at 10 Milk St, Suite 610, Boston, MA 02108.
- Throughout the whole process, be sure to be in touch with us so we can support you. Just call 617.695.2525 or email [ActionLeague@CorporateAccountability.org](mailto:ActionLeague@CorporateAccountability.org).

## **Section 2: How-to: Power mapping your elected officials**

In order to move an elected official to take action, it's helpful to explore the political, social, and economic factors that influence that official's decision-making. Power mapping is a useful exercise to learn more about an elected official, determine who and what has influence over them, and identify ways to leverage that influence to reach them and get them to say YES!

- 1) **Identify your target(s):** the person(s) who has the power to make the decision that will advance your campaign.
  - a) This is the local elected official(s) you want to ask to sign on to the campaign.
- 2) **Research who has influence over your target.** Be a creative researcher. Look for the target's donors, committees or boards they serve on, their past voting records, political endorsers, institutions, media outlets that favor the target, family, and organizations that work on similar issues. Make a simple list of influencers as you go, broken out by category.
  - a) To learn more about their network and influencers: Check OpenSecrets.org, LittleSis.org, their LinkedIn, and campaign website (looking for who/what endorsed them and what platforms they ran on).
  - b) To learn more about the issues they focus on and groups they work with: Check their social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter), local news coverage, and official congressional website.
- 3) **Rank those people based on levels of influence.** Evaluate the individuals and organizations on your power map by how influential they are and how much of a priority they are to the elected official.
  - Who on your list are most influential to the elected official?
  - Who are most influential to the official's constituents?
  - Who are likely to be with us and who likely against us? Who or what groups are the most influential to them?
- 4) **Decide who to organize.** Using your rankings from Step 3 and who you realistically have access to, select someone to prioritize. Think:
  - a) Who do we have access to?
  - b) Who could we realistically organize or move to be on our side?
- 5) **Finally, develop a few simple strategies and tactics.** Create these based on who you need to move, the best avenues for influence, and your ability to accomplish them. For example, you may determine that:
  - a) Getting a bunch of signatures from local constituents asking them to support the campaign would be most compelling to them.
  - b) Building a coalition of groups that are most influential to them or they're a part of would hold the most sway.
  - c) Getting some media attention (like letters to the editor) could convince them.
  - d) Perhaps holding a meeting with them at their office with representatives from groups that endorsed them would do the trick.
  - e) Something else!

### **Section 3: How-to: Moving a prominent local official who is difficult to reach**

Elected officials come in all stripes. Your local school board member might live around the corner or in your apartment complex. Maybe you go to the same fitness center as your town councilor. If you have folks like these who are easy to reach and easy to ask to take simple action, like signing on to a campaign letter, great! Do it! If you don't, no problem... it just takes a little more finesse.

Some elected officials may require a little more organizing to reach. That's not a bad thing—in fact, the harder someone is to reach, the more clout and influence they are likely to have, and the greater the impact their voice will have once they endorse the campaign! Think: state or national representative, mayor, even governor or senator.

Once you've power mapped your elected official (see section 2 above), follow these steps.

1. Think: Who do I know who knows this elected official (or who knows someone on my power map list, or who knows someone who knows... etc.)?
  - a. Example: Many environmental justice groups led by people of color have been and are working on emissions and green jobs campaigns at the local and state level that have faced significant opposition from utility companies. They'll have really great intel and experience on local elected officials and can help you identify who's likely to be a champion or opposition.
2. Pursue any personal or professional connections you have—ask around and cast a wide net! Ask these connections to help you get a meeting with the elected official.
3. At the same time, or if connections don't pan out, reach out! Email your elected official or their staff (you can generally find contact information online) asking to meet in person.
4. Follow up with a phone call: Chances are good they won't respond to your email. They're busy people. Pleasant persistence is key!
5. Once you set a meeting: Prep what you want to say. What context will you provide for why this campaign is important? Is there anyone you can bring with you who might help make a compelling case or show broader support? Are there any local groups you can reach out to who would support? (Get creative: Climate change affects everyone—find unlikely allies!)
6. Hold your meeting and make a strong ask for them to add their name in support. Reach out to us at [ActionLeague@CorporateAccountability.org](mailto:ActionLeague@CorporateAccountability.org) or 617.695.2525 for support prepping a meeting.
7. Have a clear, strong follow-up plan if they need some time to think about it. Follow up proactively—don't wait for them to be in touch with you.

## **Section 4: Sample email to an elected official**

### **Tips:**

1. Personalize the email: If you know the person you're writing to, make it personal and more casual. If you were connected by someone they know, make sure to mention the connection and that the person recommended you reach out.
2. Speak from the heart: Why do you care about climate justice? Let your passion show.
3. Be cordial and firm: You know this is serious and important. Make sure they know it too by making a strong ask and a promise to follow up.

### **Sample email text:**

Subject line: Add your name in support of climate justice?

Dear [name of elected official/staffer],

I'm writing to ask you to lend your support to an important campaign for climate justice by adding your name to a [sign-on letter](#).

From the hurricanes that upended the lives of millions of people from Houston to Florida to Puerto Rico this fall, to the wildfires that have been devastating the American West, we can see firsthand that the climate crisis is real and already taking a human toll -- which the Trump administration refuses to acknowledge. Moreover, we understand that the people who endure the worst effects of the changing climate are the communities of color and low-income communities, both here in the U.S. and throughout the world, that have done the least to cause the problem. Meanwhile, since inauguration day, the Trump administration has moved to gut nearly every climate policy integral to honoring the United States' commitments under the Paris Agreement of the United Nations climate treaty and recklessly advanced the interests of Big Polluters.

President Trump has indicated his intent to pull the U.S. out of the Paris Agreement. But the U.S. is not actually leaving the negotiations. In fact, it is continuing to attend treaty meetings where the Paris Agreement is negotiated, like the recent 23<sup>rd</sup> Conference of the Parties in Bonn, Germany, in order to bully the rest of the world and advance the fossil fuel industry's obstructionist agenda.

This is truly unconscionable. But the good news is that there's something that we can all do, including local elected officials like [you/the elected official]. A group I'm involved with, Corporate Accountability, is organizing a call to the Trump administration to stand down and stop undermining the global climate talks on behalf of Big Polluters so the rest of the world can advance meaningful policy for climate justice. More than 100,000 people from across the U.S. have already joined the call, and now there's an opportunity for local elected officials at all levels to sign on to a letter in support too. This can have a really big impact for advancing climate policy worldwide -- showing the global community that a movement of people here in the U.S. is standing in solidarity with the people most impacted by climate change.

Will [you/the elected official] [sign on to this letter](#)?

I'd be happy to meet with you to discuss this further. [Offer a few times that work for you.]

Please let me know. I'll give you a call soon to follow up. Thanks so much!

Sincerely,

[Your name]

**After you send:** *Make a note in your calendar to give them a follow-up call within a few days!*

## **Section 5: Sample phone call to an elected official**

### **Tips:**

1. Keep it short and simple. The script is a great guide!
2. Speak from the heart.
  - a. Personalize the intro. Let them know why you are calling and why you care about this issue.
3. Whether you are speaking with the elected official or a member of their staff, make a strong ask—and if they don't give a strong answer, set a clear follow-up plan.

### **Call script:**

Hello, my name is XX, and I live in CITY, STATE. Do you have a moment to talk?

(They will probably either say “yes” or ask “what’s this about?” If they say no, ask when a better time would be to call back.)

(If yes: Great, thank you!) I am calling to talk to you about taking action on a critical issue facing our community and people everywhere: climate change. Is climate change an issue [you/the elected official] care(s) about?

Me too. From the hurricanes that upended the lives of millions of people from Houston to Florida to Puerto Rico this fall, to the wildfires that have been devastating the American West, we can see firsthand that the climate crisis is real and already taking a human toll—which the Trump administration refuses to acknowledge. Moreover, we understand that the people who endure the worst effects of the changing climate are the communities of color and low-income communities, both here in the U.S. and throughout the world, that have done the least to cause the problem. Meanwhile, since inauguration day, the Trump administration has moved to gut nearly every climate policy integral to honoring the United States’ commitments under the Paris Agreement of the U.N. climate treaty and recklessly advanced the interests of Big Polluters.

### **Have [you/the elected official] been following Trump’s moves on climate change and the Paris Agreement?**

President Trump has indicated his intent to pull the U.S. out of the Paris Agreement. But the U.S. is not actually leaving the negotiations. In fact, it is continuing to attend treaty meetings where the Paris Agreement is negotiated, like the recent 23<sup>rd</sup> Conference of the Parties in Bonn, Germany, to bully the rest of the world and advance the fossil fuel industry’s obstructionist agenda.

This is truly unconscionable. But the good news is that there’s something that we can all do, including local elected officials like [you/the elected official]. A group I’m involved in, Corporate Accountability, is organizing a call to the Trump administration to stand down and stop undermining the global climate talks on behalf of Big Polluters so the rest of the world can advance meaningful policy for climate justice. Tens of thousands of people from across the U.S.

have already joined the call, and now there's an opportunity for local elected officials at all levels to sign on to a letter in support, too. This can have a really big impact for advancing climate policy worldwide—showing the global community that a movement of people here in the U.S. is standing in solidarity with the people most impacted by climate change.

**Will [you/the elected official] sign onto this letter?**

[Most likely response is: We'll consider it, but we'd need to see the letter first.]

Great! Thank you so much. I can email you the text of the letter right now, including a link where you can sign it. **What's the best email address to send it to?**

Okay, I will send that right now. **When do you think you can let me know by?**

Great. I'll plan to follow up with you [the next day] if I haven't heard from you by then.

Thanks again so much for your time. Talk to you soon!

**After you hang up:** *Make a note in your calendar to give them a follow-up call when you said you would!*



## **Section 6: How-to: Writing letters to the editor**

*Letters to the editor (LTEs) to your local newspaper are a great way to raise the visibility of critical issues and upcoming or recent events and educate members of your own community. They're also important to local elected officials, who monitor them to see what issues their community members are concerned about.*

### **Instructions:**

- 1) Search online for how to submit LTEs to your local paper.
  - Usually it's via a simple form on the paper's webpage or an email to the editor.
- 2) Keep it short (150 - 175 words max).
- 3) Make one point and one point only.
- 4) Personalize it.
  - For instance, mention your role as a parent or teacher, your role in your community, or simply why you are concerned about climate change.
- 5) Respond to a recently published piece!
  - LTEs are more likely to be published when they're responding to a previously published article in the outlet you're submitting to. For instance, you could cite a recent story about climate change, extreme weather, or environmental policy.
- 6) End your letter with a call to action.
- 7) Call the paper to confirm that they received your letter, and ask when it's likely to be printed (best done one day after you submit your letter).
- 8) Monitor your news outlet until your letter is printed and email a copy of it to [ActionLeague@CorporateAccountability.org](mailto:ActionLeague@CorporateAccountability.org).

### **Sample points to include:**

- In November, government delegates from around the world gathered in Bonn, Germany for meetings on the global climate change treaty—including the landmark Paris Agreement.
- As a \_\_\_\_\_, I'm extremely concerned about climate change, because \_\_\_\_\_.
- Even as Trump plans to pull the U.S. out of the Paris Agreement and renege on our climate commitments, he's sent a team to these negotiations—to continue bullying other countries to weaken their commitments as well.
- This is the opposite of what the world needs, as islands like Barbuda and St. Martin already grapple with the devastating effects of climate change.
- It's bad enough that Trump and his administration full of industry shills and climate change deniers are already rolling back progress on climate change here in the U.S. It's even worse that they're continuing to bully other countries around the world—obstructing progress to protect Big Polluters' profits.
- The only thing worse than Trump pulling out of the Paris Agreement is Trump butting deeper into the Paris Agreement talks in bad faith.
- Now is the time for local elected officials to stand up to Trump. Elected officials around the country are joining a call for the U.S. to stop undermining climate policy.
- I call on the U.S. to stand down and stop undermining the global climate talks, and I call on [XX local elected official] to sign on to this call as well



## **LETTER: Big Polluters and the US must stop undermining climate policy**

To:

The Trump administration; in particular:

U.S. Department of State, including Secretary of State Rex Tillerson

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt

As elected officials who represent people across the country concerned about our future and the future of the planet, we understand the urgency of the climate crisis. From the hurricanes that upended the lives of millions of people from Houston to Florida to Puerto Rico this fall, to the wildfires that have been devastating the American West, we can see firsthand the climate crisis is real and already taking a human toll—which the Trump administration refuses to acknowledge. Moreover, we understand that the people who endure the worst effects of the changing climate are the communities of color and low-income communities, both here in the U.S. and throughout the world, that have done the least to cause the problem. Meanwhile, since inauguration day, this administration has moved to gut nearly every climate policy integral to honoring the United States' commitments under the Paris Agreement of the U.N. climate treaty and recklessly advanced the interests of Big Polluters.

President Trump has indicated his intent to pull the U.S. out of the Paris Agreement. But the U.S. is not actually leaving the negotiations. In fact, it is continuing to attend treaty meetings where the Paris Agreement is negotiated, like the recent 23<sup>rd</sup> Conference of the Parties in Bonn, Germany, to bully the rest of the world and advance the fossil fuel industry's obstructionist agenda.

There's no place in talks about the implementation of the Paris Agreement for an administration that refuses to negotiate in good faith, is reneging on its commitments, and is actively advancing the interests of Big Polluters over those of the people most harmed by climate change.

We therefore stand in solidarity with people around the world, and echo the voices of the more than 100,000 people from across the United States, who are demanding the U.S. government:

- Stand down: Stay out of all negotiations concerning the Paris Agreement and its implementation.
- Stop representing the interests of Big Polluters in international climate negotiations.
- Pay its fair share to address the global climate crisis.

Just as we call on the federal government to advance true climate solutions, we recognize the importance of implementing just, truly sustainable, people-first climate policy at every level of government. Therefore, we further pledge to seize opportunities in our own communities to protect our local policymaking from the corrosive influence of Big Polluters and advance people-first—not profit-driven—climate policy.

Sincerely,

Name:

Title (elected office):

Date:

Phone:

Email:

City, State: