

Tips for Contacting Political and Government Officials

Version June 14, 2020

Additional tips and templates will be added periodically.

Want to see your area or organization's requests or resources included? Message justice.now.pnw@gmail.com.

Tips for Contacting Political and Government Officials	1
<i>Typed or Written Messages</i>	2
<i>Phone Calls</i>	3
Letter/Email Templates	3
Sites with Template Examples	3
Generic Sample Letter to the Editor or City Council	4
EXAMPLE LETTER TO US SENATORS	5
EXAMPLE EMAIL TO US SENATORS	6
EXAMPLE LETTER TO US REPRESENTATIVES	7
EXAMPLE EMAIL TO US REPRESENTATIVES	8
EXAMPLE LETTER TO STATE SENATORS	9
EXAMPLE EMAIL TO STATE SENATORS	10
EXAMPLE LETTER TO STATE REPRESENTATIVES	11
EXAMPLE EMAIL TO STATE REPRESENTATIVES	12
EXAMPLE LETTER TO COUNTY/CITY OFFICIALS	13
EXAMPLE EMAIL TO CITY/COUNTY OFFICIALS	14

Typed or Written Messages

Copied from the [Union of Concerned Scientists](#).

1. **Address your letter correctly.** Be sure you have the correct address and salutation on your letter. You can find the address of all of your legislators [here](#). If sending an email, many offices require you to fill out a webform, rather than send an email to a specific person. Following the directions on the website will ensure your letter goes through the proper channels and is read by the appropriate person.
2. **Write to the political officials for whom you can vote.** Elected officials are most interested in your opinions if you are their constituent. Occasionally it may be useful to write to committee chairs, even if they do not represent your district or state.
3. **Address only one issue per letter.** Such a letter will have more impact and receive a quicker response than one covering multiple issues. If you have professional expertise on the issue you are addressing, be sure to describe it. Don't expect that the aide reading the letter will assume that an ecologist or a physicist (for example) has any expertise related to climate change.
4. **Ask for something specific.** Ask the political official to take a particular action, such as cosponsoring a bill or taking a leadership role on an issue. Ask the legislator to state his or her position in a letter of response.
5. **Keep it short.** To make sure your letter is read rather than skimmed, make your points quickly and concisely.
6. **Make it personal.** Tie the issue to your personal expertise or experience, or to the district or state represented by the legislator. Use your own words.
7. **Use your institution's letterhead when appropriate.** If you work in an academic setting, consider sending your letter on your institution's letterhead. While you should be clear that your opinion is a personal one, using your institution's letterhead will grab the reader's attention and help to establish your credibility on the issue. If you work in a private or government setting, make sure you are allowed to use letterhead on correspondence of this nature.
8. **Be courteous.** Rudeness will always alienate your reader.
9. **When appropriate, express your appreciation.** Like anybody, legislators appreciate an occasional "well done." Furthermore, in this manner you signal that you are paying attention to your legislator's activities.
10. **Include your return address on your letter.** By including your address in the letter, all readers will know that you are a constituent and will know what address to send a response to.
11. **Follow up.** Follow-up letters often have a much larger impact than the initial communication. Thank the legislator for taking a correct stand, or ask questions about any unsatisfactory answers.

*****Update the italic text in orange to be locally applicable to your officials and message. Add/change content throughout these templates as you see necessary. Delete this header before printing/sending.*****

Phone Calls

Know the specific issues you want to discuss and have information about those issues in front of you before calling.

Create a phone script prior to calling. It could be something like this:

Hello, my name is _____ and I am a constituent in your district/county/city. I am contacting you because I want to know what you will do to protect black lives and prevent further instances of _____ (e.g. police brutality, etc.). I am calling to urge you to _____ (e.g. condemn police brutality, racial profiling, and the use of excessive force by police.)

Letter/Email Templates

Sites with Template Examples

Black Lives Matter Support Alliance PDX: <http://blmsapdx.com/email-templates-scripts-to-send-to-representatives-and-offices/>

Unknown source regarding defunding (re-prioritizing funds for other community services)
Portland Police Bureau: <https://defundppbnow.mailchimpsites.com/>

Rachel Cargle Template for holding your academic institution accountable for racial justice:
<https://www.patreon.com/posts/37905478>

Rachel Cargle Template for holding your employer accountable for racial justice:
<https://www.patreon.com/posts/template-for-for-37737054>

Rachel Cargle Template for holding you local school districts accountable for racial justice:
<https://www.patreon.com/posts/template-for-for-38033763>

Generic Sample Letter to the Editor or City Council

Your Name
Your Address
City, State, Zip

Date

Position Title Firstname Lastname
City Hall Address
Truth, OR 12345

Dear Position Title Lastname:

(Explain why you are writing and state that you are a constituent.) I am writing to ask you to introduce and/or support a Law/Ordinance/Policy regarding _____ for the Department/City/County/State/Country of _____ .

(Concisely specify what you are requesting. For matters requiring the sharing of significant detail, remain concise in the letter and attach a separate document.)

(Make it personal. Explain why you care about the issue and how it impacts you and your community.)

(Explain why you are asking for their support.)

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Your Name Phone Number

EXAMPLE LETTER TO US SENATORS

Your Name

Your Address

City, Oregon Zip

Email address

Date

Honorable *Political Official's Name*

United States Senator

Political Official's Address

City, State Zip

Dear Senator *insert last name*:

As a (*insert something that ties you to the community or the issue*), I am deeply troubled by what is unfolding in our country. (*If needed, add sentence to strengthen that statement*). I fear - I know - that it is not being equally applied to those in our society who are Black, Indeginous, and People of Color. The utter and grotesque failure of our criminal justice system, particularly the brutality of our law enforcement, is inexcusable and shameful. We must not allow the systemic racism found in legislation and public policy to continue to empower those in power to oppress communities of color.

Senator, I commend you for supporting S.3912 to increase accountability and transparency in law enforcement and for working in support of the Justice in Policing Act of 2020. This is the first step of many that are needed at the federal, state, and local levels to begin to address our government's and society's failings to preserve the rights and liberties of all. While I recognize the complexity and need for compromise in politics, I strongly urge you to push forward the full text of these bills and ensure that they continue to be developed in close coordination with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. (*Add or change any content, as you deem appropriate. This is only noting those Senate Bills that have been introduced to Congress as of 6.14.2020. These proposed bills and resolutions are the same nationwide so this can be used when contacting all Senators, regardless to state.*)

It is incredible to think how much has changed and yet how little progress has been made since the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's. Now is our time to lead out on a new civil rights movement. Now is our time to help shift the systems, structures, practices, and beliefs that have led to death, poverty, and incarceration of so many Black, Indeginous, and People of Color. Senator *last name of political official*, I will do my part as a citizen and member of a broader community. I humbly ask you to do the same and to fight. To fight with the tenacity and persistence and relentlessness that will be needed to implement these solutions without compromising their integrity and intent.

Respectfully,

Actual signature or e-signature

Your name

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EXAMPLE EMAIL TO US SENATORS

Subject Line: Action Requested: Police Reform (or related subject line)

Dear Senator *insert last name*:

As a *(insert something that ties you to the community or the issue)*, I am deeply troubled by what is unfolding in our country. *(If needed, add sentence to strengthen that statement)*. I fear - I know - that it is not being equally applied to those in our society who are Black, Indeginous, and People of Color. The utter and grotesque failure of our criminal justice system, particularly the brutality of our law enforcement, is inexcusable and shameful. We must not allow the systemic racism found in legislation and public policy to continue to empower those in power to oppress communities of color.

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Respectfully,

Your name

Your contact information

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EXAMPLE LETTER TO US REPRESENTATIVES

Your Name

Your Address

City, Oregon Zip

Email address

Date

Honorable *Political Official's Name*

United States Representative

Political Official's Address

City, State Zip

Dear Representative *Political Official's last name*:

As a *(insert something that ties you to the community or the issue)*, I am deeply troubled by what is unfolding in our country. *(If needed, add sentence to strengthen that statement)*. I fear - I know - that it is not being equally applied to those in our society who are Black, Indeginous, and People of Color. The utter and grotesque failure of our criminal justice system, particularly the brutality of our law enforcement, is inexcusable and shameful. We must not allow the systemic racism found in legislation and public policy to continue to empower those in power to oppress communities of color.

Representative, I ask you to support H.R.7120 Justice in Policing Act of 2020 and to support any House Resolution that supports S. 3912 to increase accountability and transparency in law enforcement. These will be the first steps of many that are needed at the federal, state, and local levels to begin to address our government's and society's failings to preserve the rights and liberties of all. While I recognize the complexity and need for compromise in politics, I strongly urge you to push forward the full text of these bills and ensure that they continue to be developed in close coordination with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. *(Add or change any content, as you deem appropriate. This is only noting those Senate Bills that have been introduced to Congress as of 6.14.2020. These proposed bills and resolutions are the same nationwide so this can be used when contacting all US Representatives, regardless to state.)*

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Respectfully,

Actual signature or e-signature

Your name

EXAMPLE EMAIL TO US REPRESENTATIVES

Subject Line: Action Requested: Police Reform (or related subject line)

Dear Representative *Political Official's last name*:

As a *(insert something that ties you to the community or the issue)*, I am deeply troubled by what is unfolding in our country. *(If needed, add sentence to strengthen that statement)*. I fear - I know - that it is not being equally applied to those in our society who are Black, Indeginous, and People of Color. The utter and grotesque failure of our criminal justice system, particularly the brutality of our law enforcement, is inexcusable and shameful. We must not allow the systemic racism found in legislation and public policy to continue to empower those in power to oppress communities of color.

Representative, I ask you to support H.R.7120 Justice in Policing Act of 2020 and to support any House Resolution that supports S. 3912 to increase accountability and transparency in law enforcement. These will be the first steps of many that are needed at the federal, state, and local levels to begin to address our government's and society's failings to preserve the rights and liberties of all. While I recognize the complexity and need for compromise in politics, I strongly urge you to push forward the full text of these bills and ensure that they continue to be developed in close coordination with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. *(Add or change any content, as you deem appropriate. This is only noting those Senate Bills that have been introduced to Congress as of 6.14.2020. These proposed bills and resolutions are the same nationwide so this can be used when contacting all US Representatives, regardless to state.)*

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Respectfully,

Your name

Your contact

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EXAMPLE LETTER TO STATE SENATORS

Your Name

Your Address

City, Oregon Zip

Email address

Date

Honorable *Political Official's Name*

State Name State Senator

Political Official's Address

City, State Zip

Dear Senator *insert last name*:

As a (*insert something that ties you to the community or the issue*), I am deeply troubled by what is unfolding in our country. (*If needed, add sentence to strengthen that statement*). I fear - I know - that it is not being equally applied to those in our society who are Black, Indeginous, and People of Color. The utter and grotesque failure of our criminal justice system, particularly the brutality of our law enforcement, is inexcusable and shameful. We must not allow the systemic racism found in legislation and public policy to continue to empower those in power to oppress communities of color.

Senator, I ask you to support *S. 1567 (this bill is specific to the State of Oregon, insert Senate Bills being considered by your state/s legislature here)* and all other bills related to the reform of our state's police and criminal justice systems as supported by the People of Color Caucus. These will be the first steps of many that are needed at the federal, state, and local levels to begin to address our government's and society's failings to preserve the rights and liberties of all. While I recognize the complexity and need for compromise in politics, I strongly urge you to push forward the full text of these bills and ensure that they are developed in close coordination with local chapters of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

(Add or change any content, as you deem appropriate. This is only noting those Senate Bills that have been introduced to Congress as of 6.14.2020. These proposed bills and resolutions are the same nationwide so this can be used when contacting all US Senators, regardless to state.)

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Respectfully,

Actual signature or e-signature

Your name

EXAMPLE EMAIL TO STATE SENATORS

Subject Line: Action Requested: Police Reform (or related subject line)

Dear Senator *insert last name*:

As a (*insert something that ties you to the community or the issue*), I am deeply troubled by what is unfolding in our country. (*If needed, add sentence to strengthen that statement*). I fear - I know - that it is not being equally applied to those in our society who are Black, Indeginous, and People of Color. The utter and grotesque failure of our criminal justice system, particularly the brutality of our law enforcement, is inexcusable and shameful. We must not allow the systemic racism found in legislation and public policy to continue to empower those in power to oppress communities of color.

Senator, I ask you to support *S. 1567 (this bill is specific to the State of Oregon, insert Senate Bills being considered by your state/s legislature here)* and all other bills related to the reform of our state's police and criminal justice systems as supported by the People of Color Caucus. These will be the first steps of many that are needed at the federal, state, and local levels to begin to address our government's and society's failings to preserve the rights and liberties of all. While I recognize the complexity and need for compromise in politics, I strongly urge you to push forward the full text of these bills and ensure that they are developed in close coordination with local chapters of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

(Add or change any content, as you deem appropriate. This is only noting those Senate Bills that have been introduced to Congress as of 6.14.2020. These proposed bills and resolutions are the same nationwide so this can be used when contacting all US Senators, regardless to state.)

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Respectfully,

Your name

Your contact information

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EXAMPLE LETTER TO STATE REPRESENTATIVES

Your Name
Your Address
City, Oregon Zip
Email address

Date

Honorable *Political Official's Name*
State Name State Representative
Political Official's Address
City, State Zip

Dear Representative *insert last name*:

As a (*insert something that ties you to the community or the issue*), I am deeply troubled by what is unfolding in our country. (*If needed, add sentences to strengthen that statement*). I fear - I know - that it is not being equally applied to those in our society who are Black, Indeginous, and People of Color. The utter and grotesque failure of our criminal justice system, particularly the brutality of our law enforcement, is inexcusable and shameful. We must not allow the systemic racism found in legislation and public policy to continue to empower those in power to oppress communities of color.

Representative, I ask you to support all proposed legislation by the *People of Color Caucus (this is specific to the State of Oregon, insert House Resolutions being considered by your state's legislature here or specific committees advancing these)* aimed at reforming our state's police standards. This will be the first steps of many that are needed at the federal, state, and local levels to begin to address our government's and society's failings to preserve the rights and liberties of all. While I recognize the complexity and need for compromise in politics, I strongly urge you to push forward the full text of these bills and ensure that they are developed in close coordination with local chapters of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. (*Add or change any content, as you deem appropriate. This is only noting those Senate Bills that have been introduced to Congress as of 6.14.2020. These proposed bills and resolutions are the same nationwide so this can be used when contacting all US Senators, regardless to state.*)

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Respectfully,
Actual signature or e-signature

Your name

EXAMPLE EMAIL TO STATE REPRESENTATIVES

Subject Line: Action Requested: Police Reform (or related subject line)

Dear Representative *insert last name*:

As a (*insert something that ties you to the community or the issue*), I am deeply troubled by what is unfolding in our country. (*If needed, add sentences to strengthen that statement*). I fear - I know - that it is not being equally applied to those in our society who are Black, Indeginous, and People of Color. The utter and grotesque failure of our criminal justice system, particularly the brutality of our law enforcement, is inexcusable and shameful. We must not allow the systemic racism found in legislation and public policy to continue to empower those in power to oppress communities of color.

Representative, I ask you to support *S. 1567 (this bill is specific to the State of Oregon, insert Senate Bills being considered by your state's legislature here or specific committees advancing these)* and all other bills related to the reform of our state's police and criminal justice systems as supported by the People of Color Caucus. These will be the first steps of many that are needed at the federal, state, and local levels to begin to address our government's and society's failings to preserve the rights and liberties of all. While I recognize the complexity and need for compromise in politics, I strongly urge you to push forward the full text of these bills and ensure that they are developed in close coordination with local chapters of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

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Respectfully,

Your name

Your contact information

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EXAMPLE LETTER TO COUNTY/CITY OFFICIALS

Your Name

Your Address

City, Oregon Zip

Email address

Date

Honorable *Political Official's Name*

Title of Political Official

Political Official's Address

City, State Zip

Dear *Political Official's Title and last name*:

As a *(insert something that ties you to the community or the issue)*, I am deeply troubled by what is unfolding in our country. *(If needed, add sentences to strengthen that statement)*. I fear - I know - that it is not being equally applied to those in our society who are Black, Indeginous, and People of Color. The utter and grotesque failure of our criminal justice system, particularly the brutality of our law enforcement, is inexcusable and shameful. We must not allow the systemic racism found in legislation and public policy to continue to empower those in power to oppress communities of color.

Title of Political Official, I ask you to work with *(insert what other political or government officials they need to work with – eg. City council, police chief, etc.)* to reform *city/county* and departmental policies and practices. Specifically, I ask you to enact [this ten point plan outlined by Campaign Zero](#), which is an extended version of the [8 Can't Wait](#) police reform initiative. This will be the first steps of many that are needed at the federal, state, and local levels to begin to address our government's and society's failings to preserve the rights and liberties of all. While I recognize the complexity and need for compromise in politics, I strongly urge you to push forward the solutions proposed in the link above in close coordination with local community-based organizations led by and for communities of color.

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Respectfully,

Actual signature or e-signature

Your name

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EXAMPLE EMAIL TO CITY/COUNTY OFFICIALS

Subject Line: Action Requested: Police Reform (or related subject line)

Dear *Political Official's Title and last name:*

As a *(insert something that ties you to the community or the issue)*, I am deeply troubled by what is unfolding in our country. *(If needed, add sentences to strengthen that statement)*. I fear - I know - that it is not being equally applied to those in our society who are Black, Indeginous, and People of Color. The utter and grotesque failure of our criminal justice system, particularly the brutality of our law enforcement, is inexcusable and shameful. We must not allow the systemic racism found in legislation and public policy to continue to empower those in power to oppress communities of color.

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Respectfully,

Your name

Your contact information