

More ways to act

Citizen action supplement

Public comments, petitions, proposed laws, court participation, ballot measures, public boards and economic action.

Read one guide for the decision in front of you. Each connects preparation to a responsible actor, a lawful route and a record of the result. These guides extend the seven starting levers in the core Field Guide.

Review edition · September 5, 2026

General preparation guidance. The chosen institution's current rules, notices and deadlines control a specific filing. Blank lines are intentional spaces for your action record.

Contents

Public comments: substantive bite · 2

Ask an agency to change a rule · 4

Bring the proposed text · 7

Bring the record to court · 10

Put a measure before voters · 13

Work where the decision takes shape · 16

Organize around an economic decision · 19

For the original examples and linked tools, [download the full HTML kit](#) and open index.html. External source links in this PDF are clickable.

1 • Public comments: substantive bite

A strong comment makes a specific problem hard to miss: here is the evidence, here is why it matters, and here is the change requested.

In federal notice-and-comment rulemaking, agencies must consider and respond to significant comments. That response may explain why the agency rejects an objection. It need not be a personal reply, and it does not guarantee a different rule. [Perez v. Mortgage Bankers Association, 575 U.S. 92, 96 \(2015\)](#) describes this duty.

Make each objection count

1. **Name the decision.** Identify the docket, proposed section, page and agency rationale. Explain how your point bears on a factor the agency may lawfully consider.
2. **Show the defect.** Identify missing data, a mistaken assumption, an unsupported calculation, or a relevant effect the analysis missed. Link the source and give the page or table.
3. **Explain the consequence.** Show why correcting this problem could affect the agency's conclusion. An error without an explained consequence may not be material. [Portland Cement Association v. Ruckelshaus, 486 F.2d 375, 394 \(D.C. Cir. 1973\)](#) makes this distinction.
4. **Request a workable change.** Ask for a corrected analysis, a different provision, or an alternative within the agency's authority. Explain how it serves the law's purpose. An alternative strengthens many comments; it is not a universal prerequisite to raising a valid objection.

A short example: show why the model matters

Hypothetical - not a finding about an actual proceeding. A proposed water rule relies on a stream-flow model that omits recent dry years. A resident or hydrologist identifies the model version and page, supplies verified measurements for the same location, explains how the omission could distort the flow estimate, and requests a rerun with the newer data. The useful work is the evidence chain, not whether the submission is two pages or twenty.

You do not need professional credentials to contribute useful evidence. Describe firsthand experience with dates, places and records. State what you observed and what you cannot establish.

Put the argument where it can be found

Lead with numbered objections and requested changes. Put detailed studies in clearly labeled attachments, with pinpoint references in the main text. Long submissions can address many technical issues. Length alone adds no legal force. Repetition can hide the strongest point; a long document remains useful when its arguments are clear.

Economic models, scientific studies and legal analysis can each test a different part of a proposal. Citizens can use the same disciplines, with partners where needed. A filing does not

preserve every possible court claim merely because it is long.

An opening you can adapt

“In [docket, section and page], the agency relies on [assumption]. [Source, date and table] shows [specific problem]. This matters because [effect on the decision]. I request [correction or alternative] within [relevant authority]. Please address this evidence in the final explanation.”

Before filing, verify every example and number. Save the exact text, attachments and receipt. After the decision, compare the agency’s explanation with each numbered objection. Court review depends on the governing law, standing, deadlines and whether issues were properly raised; a strong comment does not itself stop a rule or establish a right to sue.

2 • Ask an agency to change a rule

A rulemaking petition gives a citizen a way to put a proposed change before an agency even when no comment window is open. Begin with one rule, one documented problem and one change the agency has power to make.

Choose the right route

A **public comment** responds to an announced proceeding. A **rulemaking petition** asks for a rule to be issued, amended or repealed. An **individual complaint or appeal** asks for action on a specific case. Keep these routes separate so your request reaches the office that can act.

For covered federal rulemaking, [5 U.S.C. § 553\(e\)](#) establishes an interested person's right to petition. Section 553 has scope exceptions. Read the agency's statute and petition rules; state agencies use their own law. A petition asks the agency to use authority it already has. It cannot give an agency power Congress withheld.

If a live notice already covers your concern, preserve its comment deadline while checking whether a separate petition adds anything. A petition does not automatically reopen that window or pause another filing deadline.

Prepare a petition someone can act on

1. **Identify the rule and decision-maker.** Save the current rule, citation, agency and petition instructions. Check whether a pending proposal already addresses the problem.
2. **State the change.** Include proposed wording or the substance of the change as the agency requires. For repeal, identify the exact provision. Show how the requested action fits the governing law.
3. **Build the evidence chain.** Describe the affected people or places, dated facts, source pages and the rule's role in the problem. Separate personal experience, verified data and inference.
4. **Test the remedy.** Explain how the change would work, who would carry it out, likely costs and trade-offs, and how the result could be measured. Address contrary evidence rather than leaving it for the agency to discover.
5. **Make the package easy to review.** Lead with a short request. Number the supporting points. Index attachments and cite their relevant pages. Follow the agency's required contents, signatures and format.

A petition outline to copy

Petition to [issue / amend / repeal] [rule and citation]

Petitioner and interest: [Identify yourself or the authorized organization as required. Explain how the rule affects the interest you describe.]

Requested action: [State the exact change and include the proposed text or substance required by the agency.]

Authority: [Identify the law that permits the agency to take this action and any relevant limits.]

Problem and evidence: [Give numbered findings, dated sources and attachment page references.]

Why this remedy: [Explain expected effects, costs, alternatives, contrary evidence and how to check the result.]

Attachments and contact: [List documents and provide the contact information the official procedure requires.]

This outline is a drafting aid. Complete the official requirements for the agency you choose before filing.

File with the right office

The examples below were checked September 5, 2026. Open the linked instructions again before submitting. A petition address can differ from an agency's complaint portal or a comment docket.

Federal Trade Commission example

[16 CFR § 1.31](#) requires petitioner contact details and interest, the requested action and affected rules, and factual and legal support - including known unfavorable information. It sets standards for research and statistical evidence. Read those standards if you rely on a study.

File with the Secretary through electronicfilings@ftc.gov or the postal route in the rule. A qualifying petition receives a docket number and contact. Docketed petitions receive public notice and a 30-day comment period. That period concerns comments on the petition; it is not a deadline to grant it.

Confidential treatment requires a separate request and public and confidential versions under the stated rules; it is not automatic. The Commission may grant or deny the petition in whole or part. Starting a proceeding is still separate from adopting a rule.

Securities and Exchange Commission example

The [SEC's petition page](#) directs filings to its Secretary and prefers Secretarys-Office@SEC.GOV. Use one delivery method. Include the proposed text or substance, or identify what should be repealed, and explain your interest or reasons. The page links Rule 192 and lists processed petitions.

The SEC says petitions become public after processing and asks filers to omit personal identifying information. Check its instructions instead of copying the FTC’s contact-detail requirements. Publication of a petition does not show Commission endorsement.

Keep the request and the response together

Save the exact petition, attachments, delivery evidence, acknowledgement and assigned number. Record the following on a separate sheet:

Agency and rule: _____

Official instructions checked on: _____

Submission date and delivery evidence: _____

Petition or docket number and public link: _____

Agency contact and next status-check date: _____

Response received, reasons given and issues left unanswered: _____

Next act, responsible person and date: _____

Ask a clear status question: “Please confirm the status of petition [number], received [date], and identify any missing information or next procedural step.” Send new material through the agency’s stated process and keep each version.

5 U.S.C. § 555(b) and (e) address conclusion within a reasonable time and notice of denial, with reasons subject to the statute’s exceptions. They do not set one universal number of days for all petitions. A requested response date is your follow-up plan unless a law makes it binding.

If denied, compare the explanation against the request and evidence. Decide whether new facts, a narrower proposal or a legislative change addresses the stated obstacle. If considering court review of denial or delay, obtain review of the actual statute, standing, finality and filing deadlines. This guide does not establish those requirements for a particular case.

Measure the result: distinguish receipt, docketing, public comment, a decision to begin rulemaking, final adoption, and a verified public benefit. Each needs its own record.

3 • Bring the proposed text

A citizen can bring more than a request to fix a problem. Bring a clear proposal: the rule to change, the office responsible, the resources needed and the record that will show whether it worked.

This guide helps you prepare a legislative proposal for a sponsor and drafting review. It does not turn a citizen draft into an introduced bill or enacted law.

Choose an instrument that can do the job

Identify the government level that controls the issue. A federal statute, state statute, local ordinance, agency rule and internal policy have different adoption paths. Check the current law before choosing a title for your proposal.

In Congress, bills and joint resolutions can become law through the applicable process. Simple and concurrent resolutions can address internal matters or express a position, but do not themselves enact a public law. A joint resolution proposing a constitutional amendment follows a different path. [House guide to bills and resolutions](#).

For state and local action, find the official legislature or council website, current code, charter and drafting instructions. Ask which body has authority, whether a higher law limits the change, and who may introduce it. Do not assume a local “resolution” has the same effect as a congressional resolution.

If the law already delegates the needed choice to an agency, consider a rulemaking petition. If the duty already exists and is not being carried out, an oversight or enforcement route may fit better than new legislation.

Build a packet a sponsor can use

1. **One-page decision brief.** State the problem, affected people, strongest evidence, proposed remedy and requested next act. Say what current law fails to do.
2. **Current and proposed text.** Identify the exact code section and source date. Show deletions and additions clearly, and supply a clean version. Explain any new terms. Label your document “Citizen proposal for drafting review.”
3. **Section-by-section explanation.** Explain each clause in plain language. Name the person or office that must act, the trigger, deadline and expected result.
4. **Cost and operating note.** Estimate staff time, systems, ongoing costs and who pays. State assumptions and unknowns. Do not call your estimate an official fiscal score. Ask the sponsor to obtain the appropriate budget review.
5. **Evidence and objections.** Number sources and pinpoint pages. Include relevant contrary evidence, affected groups and alternative designs. Explain trade-offs rather than implying the change has no costs.
6. **Implementation and review.** Specify how the duty starts, what funding or further rules it needs, who checks compliance, and what remedy follows a failure. Decide whether a

review date or expiration is appropriate.

Ask drafting counsel to check cross-references, existing definitions, constitutional and statutory limits, conflicts with other law, enforcement, funding and transition. A model from another place is a starting point; its legal setting may differ.

A sponsor request to adapt

“The attached records show [problem]. We propose changing [provision] so [responsible office] must [defined action]. The packet includes proposed text, an explanation and cost assumptions. Will your office request drafting and fiscal review, identify the responsible committee, and tell us whether it will sponsor the proposal?”

Agree who may speak for a group before using its name. Keep factual support separate from an endorsement of the entire draft. Ask affected residents and the people expected to implement it to test the proposal.

Worked example: make a service delay visible

Hypothetical drafting exercise. This is not existing law or a finding about a named agency. A local benefit program publishes only an average processing time. Residents cannot tell how many applications remain overdue. Suppose local legal review confirms that the council can impose reporting duties on this office.

Citizen proposal for drafting review

Monthly service report. Beginning 90 days after this ordinance takes effect, the administering office shall publish a monthly report within 20 days after each month ends. Each report shall state: applications received; applications decided; applications pending at month-end; and pending applications beyond the program’s applicable decision deadline.

The report shall explain the counting method, identify missing records and describe material changes in the method. The office shall correct a material published error and keep a dated notice explaining the correction.

The report shall not disclose applicant identities or information protected by law. Before the first report, the office shall publish a method to protect people from identification through small groups of records.

The office shall present the report to the council committee responsible for the program each quarter and identify steps to address overdue cases. The council shall review the reporting requirement one year after the first report.

What must be settled before introduction

Replace “administering office” and the committee description with exact names. Verify the decision deadline and the council’s power. Ask staff to test whether the needed records exist and to estimate reporting costs. Specify the lawful funding source, effective-date clause and compliance process. Review privacy rules and whether the required publication could expose applicants.

The sample requires reporting and review. It does not create a new benefit, accelerate every case, or create a private right to sue. If the objective is timely decisions, examine whether a

separate enforceable deadline, staffing change or appeal remedy is also needed.

How the citizen checks the result

Compare monthly publication dates and the overdue-case count under a stable definition. Inspect corrections and committee responses. A smaller backlog may be useful evidence; it does not by itself prove this reporting requirement caused the improvement. Check staffing, application volume and other changes.

Track the text, not just the promise

A House sponsor introduces a bill; the Clerk assigns a number and the Speaker refers it to the appropriate committee with the Parliamentarian's assistance. Introduction is a recorded step, not a guarantee of a hearing or vote. [House introduction and referral guide](#).

Keep a version log with these columns: date, official document and link, section changed, practical effect, your requested response, responsible office, and next check. Save the citizen draft separately from official versions. When text moves into another bill, record the new bill and provision.

1. **After a sponsor agrees:** confirm the actual bill or ordinance number, introduced text and referral.
2. **Before committee action:** check the agenda, proposed amendments and evidence submission rules. Ask for a specific correction tied to the current version.
3. **After each vote:** save the adopted text and vote record. Check whether a deadline, funding term, safeguard or enforcement clause changed.
4. **After enactment:** verify the final law, effective date, funding and implementing instructions. Follow the responsible office's performance.
5. **If it stalls:** record the procedural stage and unanswered request. Consider a narrower amendment, a different lawful instrument or another session; do not report silence as a defeat on the merits.

The [CRS legislative-process report, dated November 24, 2020 in the retrieved copy](#), explains why bills do not all follow one predictable sequence. Use current chamber and committee rules for a live proposal; this historical overview does not certify today's procedural details.

Your work product is a reviewable proposal and a record of what the institution does with it. A sponsor's support is useful. The enacted duty, its funding and its delivery determine what changed for citizens.

4 • Bring the record to court

Courts offer specific routes for enforcing duties and explaining the stakes of a case. Start by identifying which route fits. A complaint to a public office, a lawsuit and a friend-of-the-court brief are different acts.

What are you asking the court to do?

- **Citizen suit:** You ask for a remedy under a law that permits the claim. You become a party with procedural duties.
- **Amicus curiae brief:** A “friend of the court” offers relevant argument in an existing case. This does not make the writer a party or provide a personal remedy.
- **Evidence for a legal team:** You help document facts for lawyers assessing or pursuing a case. They determine how the material can properly enter the record.

A referral to an attorney general or inspector general does not itself file any of these court documents. Keep each route’s deadline and receipt separate.

A citizen suit needs a specific legal basis

The [Clean Air Act, 42 U.S.C. § 7604](#), permits specified claims involving emissions requirements and certain EPA duties that are not discretionary. It does not authorize a suit over every enforcement choice. The section includes notice requirements, limits involving government enforcement, venue rules and provisions on litigation costs.

Do not turn “60 days” into a universal instruction. The section generally specifies 60-day notice periods for certain claims, includes exceptions, and specifies 180-day notice for its unreasonable-delay route. The claim and applicable notice regulations determine recipients, content and timing. Other statutes must be checked separately.

Before sending a notice of intent to sue, ask a lawyer to identify the exact duty, defendant, court, notice procedure, deadline and remedy. Ask about fees, expert costs and possible exposure; an award of costs is not assured.

Federal standing ordinarily requires a concrete, personal injury that is actual or imminent, a link to the challenged conduct, and relief likely to address it. [Constitution Annotated: standing overview](#). An organization’s ability to sue requires its own analysis. Concern for the public good alone does not settle standing.

Questions for a legal intake meeting

1. What exact legal duty appears unmet, and which record supports that conclusion?
2. Who has been affected, where, when and how? What can each person attest to from direct knowledge?
3. What order could the court issue that would address the harm?
4. Are an agency appeal, notice, exhaustion requirement or separate review deadline involved?

5. Is another enforcement action pending? What effect does it have on this route?
6. Who would represent the participants, pay expenses and make settlement decisions?

Contribute what the parties have not adequately explained

Choose a narrow contribution tied to the legal question: a community consequence, a technical method or an institutional practice supported by reliable sources. Review the parties' briefs first. A useful brief adds understanding instead of repeating their arguments.

Under [Federal Rule of Appellate Procedure 29](#), private amici at the initial merits stage generally need all parties' consent or court permission. The rule addresses identity, interest, authorship and funding disclosures, length, timing and other requirements. Its usual filing period is seven days after the supported party's principal brief; the neutral-brief and rehearing provisions differ. Verify the current rule, local rules and case orders before calculating any deadline.

The Supreme Court has separate rules. Its [May 2026 amicus guide](#) requires counsel of record who belongs to the Court's Bar and does not permit pro se amicus briefs from people outside that Bar. Petition-stage notice, merits filings and emergency applications have different requirements. Use the [Court's current rules page](#) and the actual docket, not a deadline copied from another court.

Ask the legal team how community facts can properly be used at this stage. Do not assume an appellate amicus brief lets you add new case evidence. Keep statements accurate, sources traceable and personal information limited to what the filing properly requires.

A contribution offer to adapt

"Our group has [specific records or expertise] relevant to [question in the case]. We can explain [bounded point] and provide [sources and method]. Would this assist an amicus brief or another permitted submission? Please identify the filing stage, deadline, representation needs and disclosure requirements before we prepare public text."

Confirm who may authorize the organization's name, who approves the final wording, and how authorship and financial support must be disclosed. Joining a brief means reviewing what it actually says.

Prepare a record a legal partner can assess

Create one organized packet with a short cover note and an index. Preserve originals separately.

Issue and requested result: _____

Agency, entity, rule or permit: _____

Case name, court and docket, if one exists: _____

Dates and deadlines from official records: _____

Facts personally observed, with dates and locations: _____

Documents, source links and relevant pages: _____

Contrary evidence and unanswered questions: _____

Prior submissions, notices and responses: _____

Legal contact, agreed next step and date: _____

Separate observation from inference. Keep original files, dates and explanations of how records were obtained. Ask the receiving legal team how to transfer sensitive material. Do not publish someone else's personal records to demonstrate that you have evidence.

Follow through to the actual result

Track consultation, representation agreement, notice, filing, acceptance, orders, judgment and later compliance as separate events. An accepted brief is not a ruling in its favor. A court order may require explanation or further process rather than the policy outcome you sought. Read the operative language, deadlines and any stay or appeal before reporting what changed.

Citizen preparation can make a legal assessment faster and better grounded. The next useful act is a complete, truthful record connected to a lawful claim or a relevant contribution.

5 • Put a measure before voters

Where state or local law allows it, citizens can propose a measure or ask voters to accept or reject a legislative act. The first task is to establish the lawful route. An online petition and a qualifying ballot petition are different documents.

Know which process you are using

- **Initiative:** citizens propose statutory or constitutional text, or a local measure where permitted.
- **Popular or veto referendum:** citizens seek a vote on a legislative act under the jurisdiction's rules.
- **Legislative referral:** the governing body places a measure before voters.

The available subjects, officials, thresholds and deadlines vary. State-level availability does not establish a local route, and a local route does not establish a statewide one. This guide makes no nationwide count of qualifying jurisdictions.

First locate the official election office and the current initiative or referendum manual for the exact government body. Read the governing constitution, charter or law cited there. If the desired route is unavailable, consider a legislative proposal through an authorized sponsor.

Settle these questions before collecting qualifying signatures

1. **Authority and subject.** Is the proposal permitted? Is it legislative in character? Are there excluded subjects, single-subject rules or limits imposed by higher law? Obtain review of the actual text.
2. **Text and initial filing.** Who may act as proponent or chief petitioner? What form, proposed wording, title review, fee or preliminary signatures must come first? Which edits require restarting the process?
3. **Calendar.** What event starts the clock? Record dates for initial filing, title challenges, circulation, submission, validation and the target election. Do not infer a deadline from election day alone.
4. **Signature rules.** Who may sign and circulate? What registration, residence, geography, sheet format, declaration and paid-circulator rules apply? Use the approved form and required wording.
5. **Campaign responsibilities.** Check committee registration, treasurer, banking, contribution, spending, reporting and disclaimer rules with the responsible campaign-finance office. A volunteer effort may still have legal obligations.
6. **Capacity.** Estimate staffing, accessible materials, printing, legal review and collection time. Plan for invalid signatures without representing unverified totals as valid.

Ask the election office: “We are considering [initiative or referendum] concerning [subject and government body]. Please identify the controlling procedure, filing officer, current forms, required approvals, deadlines and campaign-reporting resources.” Save the answer with the official instructions.

For a referendum on an enacted law, promptly verify the filing trigger and whether the law is eligible. Do not assume that starting a petition suspends the law or that every legislative act can be challenged this way.

Oregon shows why the steps must be separated

The [Oregon statewide process](#) begins with a prospective petition. For initiatives, 1,000 sponsorship signatures precede the attorney general’s ballot-title process. Qualifying-signature circulation follows completion of that process, written approval and review of circulator requirements. Those early sponsorship signatures are a distinct stage.

The same official page describes a different referendum route for nonemergency acts: written approval precedes circulation, and signatures must be submitted no later than 90 days after the legislature adjourns sine die. This is an Oregon rule, not a national deadline. The page links current manuals and forms; verify them for the intended election.

Oregon’s [local process](#) assigns different filing officers for county, city and district measures. It warns that local charters or ordinances can supersede some procedures. Local initiatives use a separate prospective-petition form and require written approval to circulate after the ballot title is complete. A statewide checklist cannot simply be copied into a city campaign.

Qualification is its own finding

The [California Secretary of State’s status page](#) separates measures being circulated, undergoing signature verification, and becoming eligible or qualified for a ballot. Use the relevant election office’s status labels and official determination. A campaign’s signature count is not proof of ballot placement.

These examples were checked September 5, 2026. They illustrate procedural differences; they are not a filing calendar for an unspecified proposal.

A ballot-measure action card

Jurisdiction and route: _____

Official manual, law and date checked: _____

Filing officer and contact: _____

Approved text, title and identifying number: _____

Approval needed before circulation: _____

Threshold and how it is calculated: _____

Calendar trigger and official deadlines: _____

Circulator and signer rules reviewed by: _____

Campaign reporting duties and responsible person: _____

Submission receipt and official qualification decision: _____

Election result, effective date and implementation office: _____

Keep signed petition sheets through the legally required process. Limit access to personal information and do not substitute public photographs of signatures for the required official submission. Give circulators accurate instructions and a contact for questions.

After qualification and voting

Explain the official text, fiscal effects, trade-offs and arguments accurately. Distinguish your position from the election office's neutral description. After voting, save the certified result and inspect the final operative text, effective date and any court order affecting implementation.

Assign follow-through: who must fund, administer or enforce the measure? What record will show the promised benefit? Winning a vote and delivering the result are separate milestones.

6 • Work where the decision takes shape

A board meeting or hearing can put a specific public problem before people who shape a decision. Use the agenda, the evidence and the body's actual authority. Attendance is a beginning; a recorded recommendation, vote or correction shows what followed.

Find the body that can act

Read the charter or establishing law, membership list, current agenda, recent minutes and staff contact. Identify whether the body advises, adopts policy, spends funds or decides individual applications. Write down who receives its recommendations and who makes the final decision.

A federal advisory committee is not the same institution as a city council, legislative committee or land-use board. Their rules are different. [GSA's charter guidance](#) points to federal committee charters in the FACA database. Use the actual charter to understand the committee's task; confirm its current status and meeting notice before making plans.

For covered federal advisory meetings, [41 CFR § 102-3.140](#) addresses public access, written statements and speaking under agency procedures. Meetings may be closed or partially closed under applicable exemptions. An opportunity to attend does not mean unlimited speaking time or a right to decide the committee's recommendation.

For local boards, use the city or county's official directory and establishing documents. Check whether an item is a broad policy discussion or an individual permit or appeal. The latter may have special evidence, contact and appeal rules.

Apply to serve with a clear contribution

- 1. Read a live vacancy notice.** Confirm eligibility, the seat's purpose, appointing authority, term, time commitment and application deadline. Do not treat an old call for nominees as open.
- 2. Describe relevant experience.** Explain what you know from work, study or lived experience and how it fits the body's task. Use specific examples; do not claim to speak for a community without authorization.
- 3. Check service obligations.** Ask about orientation, attendance, financial or other disclosures, conflicts of interest, public-record duties and available access support.
- 4. Submit through the stated route.** Keep the application and acknowledgement. Confirm whether an interview, nomination or appointment remains outstanding.
- 5. Prepare for the role.** Once appointed, learn the rules for motions, voting, recusals and communications. Keep public-business records through the required system.

[Portland's Advisory Bodies Program](#) is an example of an official local entry point for openings and program information. It is not evidence that every listed body is recruiting or that an

applicant will be selected.

“I am applying for [seat]. My experience with [specific work or issue] would help the body assess [question within its remit]. I can commit [time]. Please identify the appointment process, service obligations and any required disclosures.”

Serving means exercising the responsibilities of the position. It does not make the member an unrestricted spokesperson for the institution or exempt the member from conflict rules.

Give the body an actionable request

Open the current agenda and proposal. Note the item or bill number, version, meeting date, registration instructions, speaking limit and written-submission deadline. Request interpretation, accessibility support or remote participation early through the official contact.

1. **Lead with the decision.** Identify the item and requested action: amend a clause, adopt a safeguard, request a study or correct a factual assumption.
2. **Use your strongest evidence.** Give one or two facts with dates and source pages. Describe personal experience accurately and state its limits.
3. **Explain the consequence.** Connect the requested change to affected people, costs or service outcomes. Address a real trade-off.
4. **Supply usable wording.** When helpful, attach the proposed clause and a short explanation. A citizen suggestion is not a formally moved amendment.
5. **Fit the time.** Rehearse aloud. Put supporting detail in a clearly indexed written submission, using the permitted route.

A short testimony structure

“I am [name and relevant connection]. On [item], I ask you to [specific act]. The record at [source and page] shows [fact]. This affects [people or outcome] because [mechanism]. Please [requested amendment or next step], and identify where the public can see the decision.”

Answer questions directly. If you do not know, say so and offer a sourced follow-up through the permitted channel. For a group, coordinate distinct evidence rather than repeating the same unsupported claim.

Use the actual submission route

[Portland’s council testimony page](#) directs people to its registration/submission process and says written testimony is not accepted by email. An email address for questions is not automatically a filing address.

The [Oregon Legislature’s testimony instructions](#) describe submission within 48 hours after a committee meeting’s start and warn that written testimony is public. Check the meeting’s own instructions. This Oregon rule is not a national hearing deadline.

Examples checked September 5, 2026. A town hall, public-comment period, formal hearing and legislative markup are different events. Confirm whether evidence is being accepted and how it enters the record; speaking does not compel an answer or a favorable vote.

Follow the recommendation to the decision

Body and authority: _____

Agenda item, bill or application: _____

Meeting and filing deadlines: _____

Specific request and evidence: _____

Submission receipt or speaking record: _____

Motion, recommendation, vote and minutes: _____

Final decision-maker and next meeting: _____

Implementation act and result to check: _____

Save the written submission and receipt. After the meeting, inspect minutes, recording, adopted wording and vote. If the body only recommends, follow the matter to the office that can adopt or reject it. If a record misstates your contribution, ask for correction through the body's process.

For a permit, benefit or appeal, preserve separate objection and appeal deadlines. An informal follow-up does not replace a required filing. Report the actual result: a heard concern, amended recommendation, adopted decision or implemented change. Each needs its own evidence.

7 • Organize around an economic decision

Wages, contracts and institutional investments are governed by decisions people can identify and contest. Choose one decision and the body that controls it. Prepare a proposal that can become an agreement, purchasing requirement or investment policy - and a record that will show whether it is followed.

Workplace bargaining: define a demand workers can enforce

Start with the workers affected and any existing bargaining representative. Identify the workplace, current agreement, expiry date, wage or safety issue, and the person authorized to negotiate. A civic group can support workers; it cannot appoint itself their bargaining representative.

The [NLRB's bargaining guidance](#) explains bargaining through an employee representative over wages, hours and other employment terms. Under [29 U.S.C. § 158\(d\)](#), the bargaining duty does not compel agreement to a proposal or a concession.

Check [NLRA coverage](#) first. Many private-sector employees are covered; public employees and several other categories are excluded. An exclusion does not by itself settle rights under another law. Public-sector and other special regimes require their own review.

1. Document the problem using records workers may lawfully provide. Separate individual experience from workplace-wide data.
2. Agree on one demand with the authorized worker organization: exact coverage, amount or standard, start date and exceptions.
3. Ask how the proposal enters bargaining and how members participate in approving an agreement.
4. Include a way to check implementation and raise noncompliance through the applicable grievance or enforcement process.
5. Compare the signed agreement with schedules, pay records or safety practices. A negotiating proposal is not a contract term.

Before planning a stoppage, picketing or pressure on another employer, obtain advice under the applicable labor law and agreement. This preparation guide does not establish that a particular tactic is protected.

"We seek [specific term] for [covered workers], effective [date]. The evidence is [records]. Who can negotiate this term, how will workers approve it, and what process will correct a failure to follow it?"

Public purchasing: put the standard into the contract

Identify the purchasing office, contract or solicitation, renewal date and budget authority. Read the current specification, evaluation criteria and performance requirements. Distinguish a proposal for future policy from a request to change an active competition or existing contract.

Federal acquisition rules generally require full and open competition with specified exceptions. [FAR subpart 6.1](#) supplies that baseline. Check the actual agency rules and applicable deviations for a federal procurement; state and local purchasing uses its own authority.

1. Define the public outcome: reliable service, safer conditions, reduced waste or another lawful objective. Cite the evidence of the problem.
2. Propose a measurable requirement, verification method and response to nonperformance. Avoid standards that merely favor a named vendor.
3. Ask procurement staff to review legality, competition, cost, available suppliers and the stage at which a change is possible.
4. Use the designated public policy or solicitation channel. Keep procurement questions separate from a formal bid protest and its eligibility rules.
5. Inspect the adopted specification, signed contract, performance reports and corrective actions.

Hypothetical: A city's service contract promises timely repairs but reports no missed appointments. Citizens could propose a defined response-time measure, monthly reporting and a contract remedy reviewed by procurement staff. "Responsible purchasing" becomes testable when the duty and consequence appear in the contract.

Institutional investment: name the policy and the trustee's duty

A university endowment, public pension and private retirement plan do not have identical purposes or governing law. Locate the investment policy, board or trustees, delegated manager authority, meeting process and available holdings reports. Identify whether the request concerns disclosure, shareholder engagement, new purchases or sale of existing holdings.

The Department of Labor explains [ERISA fiduciary responsibilities](#), including prudent selection and monitoring for covered plans. It also notes that government plans are not covered by ERISA. Do not apply a private-plan rule to a public pension or assume an endowment can ignore its governing duties.

1. Identify the specific exposure or conduct using dated holdings and reliable evidence. An institution's total assets are not its holdings in the company at issue.
2. State the proposed policy, covered assets, exceptions, timeline and reporting requirement.

3. Request analysis of legal authority, beneficiary or institutional duties, risk, fees, liquidity and implementation costs.
4. Compare available options, including engagement, voting, purchase restrictions or divestment. Explain why the selected route fits the purpose.
5. Track the board’s adopted wording and manager instructions, then inspect later reports against the defined scope.

A sale transfers ownership; it does not by itself prove a company changed its operations. Measure the institution’s action separately from any claimed effect on the company. This is a civic-policy preparation route, not advice to trade personal investments.

A shared action card

Decision and controlling body: _____

Affected people and authorized representatives: _____

Current agreement, contract or policy: _____

Proposed change and supporting evidence: _____

Legal, cost and implementation questions: _____

Decision date and submission route: _____

Adopted wording and responsible implementer: _____

Measure, baseline, reporting date and correction process: _____

Ask for a defined act within the decision-maker’s authority. Keep the response and final wording. Return on the agreed date with the evidence needed to tell whether a promise became practice.

Publication record

Directed by Thom Barrett. Prepared with OpenAI Codex assistance from the Operation Citizen corpus and cited source checks. This new guidance remains a review edition awaiting final author review. Original source documents are preserved in the full kit.