



#JUSTUS

POWERED BY **JLUSA**

In a world with increasing natural and man-made disasters -- ranging from hurricanes to pandemics such as COVID19 -- having an emergency management plan in place is the difference between life and death.

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LETTER FROM DEANNA HOSKINS, PRESIDENT & CEO, JUSTLEADERSHIPUSA

Dear Colleagues and Friends:

COVID-19 has revealed what we, the formerly and currently incarcerated, already knew. State and federal governments have emergency preparedness in place to save all people from all man-made and natural disasters, but nothing to protect the lives of those incarcerated. Yet, those detained are required to assist disaster mitigation in almost every state for less than \$1 per hour - putting out wildfires in California to digging graves in NY.

Policymakers' gross lack of foresight, care and attention to protect people in prison and jails during this crisis, and all the ones that have preceded it, is reprehensible. This refusal to save the lives, most of whom are disproportionately Black and Brown, reflects the idea that we are disposable. People in correctional facilities are our mothers, fathers, teachers and communities leaders. **We are human beings and our lives matter**

COVID-19 is history repeating itself and we cannot address this as an isolated incident. During Hurricane Katrina, the stray cats and dogs were tended to before those behind prison walls. **It is time to create proactive solutions to decarcerate when all man-made or natural disasters inevitably strike. We must adopt policies that address ALL parts of the criminal justice pipeline to act in sync, to release people and save human lives.**

Demand better of your representatives in less than one minute:

<https://secure.everyaction.com/HDnIn0wrL0a1lFXD4tZPFg2>

Onward!

A Note on How to Use This Toolkit

The contents included in this toolkit are intended to centralize all resources you may need in carrying out the #JustUs campaign. For ease, blue highlighted headers under the “Contents” section can be clicked on to get directly to the section you need. For example, if you need the social media toolkit, simply click the link and jump straight to it.

This toolkit is intended to support the #JustUS campaign for all levels of organizers and advocates. It has information that walks the user through using policy recommendations to draft a bill, identification of elected official targets, direct actions, digital organizing and social media content. We built this as a roadmap for running a successful state and federal level #JustUs campaign. As you use the toolkit, you may see things you want to add based on your extensive experience. We welcome your feedback.

QUICK LINKS

JLUSA Homepage: <https://jlusa.org/>

Campaign Home Page: <https://jlusa.org/justus/>

Cover Letter/Backgrounder: <https://bit.ly/JustUSBackgrounder>

Policy Recommendations: <https://bit.ly/PolicyRecs>

Letter Campaign: <https://secure.everyaction.com/HDnIn0wrL0a1IFXD4tZPFg2>

Social Media Toolkit: <https://bit.ly/JJLUSAToolkit>

Talking Points: <https://bit.ly/JustUStalkingpoints>

GLOSSARY

- **Advisory Board:** A group of people appointed by the government or a designated government official to provide guidance to the government and recommend policy on a specific issue.
- **Bench warrant:** A written order from a judge that authorizes the arrest of an individual for a specific crime.
- **Bill:** A draft law or piece of legislation that has been proposed to the legislature at either the state or federal level.
- **Bill sponsor:** The legislator who introduces a bill for consideration, and usually takes the lead in gathering support for the legislation.
- **Bill co-sponsor:** A legislator who signs on to a bill either before or after it is introduced to show their support for the legislation. Some bills have hundreds of co-sponsors.
- **Bill Drafting Commission:** aides in drafting legislation; advises as to the constitutionality, consistency or effect of proposed legislation; conducts research; and publishes and maintains the documents of the Legislature.
- **CBO:** A community-based organization, which is generally a public or private organization focused on meeting the needs of a specific community or subset of a community.
- **Coalition:** An alliance of individuals or organizations working together to achieve a common goal.

- **Correctional facilities:** A prison, jail, or penitentiary where people live in confinement as a punishment for certain crimes.
- **Decarceration:** The process of removing individuals from prisons, jails, or other institutions where they are incarcerated.
- **Detention:** The state of being held in short-term custody, usually before being charged with or tried for a crime. Individuals are often held in detention while police make decisions on whether or not they should be arrested; in order to be detained, police must have reasonable suspicion that an individual has been involved in a crime.
- **Direct Action:** The use of strikes, protests, or other forms of public demonstration in order to drive change; usually direct action is intended to draw public attention to an issue and exert pressure on lawmakers to act.
- **Emergency Declaration:** A declaration, usually by the President or Governor of a state, that the state, country, or other local area are in a state of emergency due to a natural disaster, public health crisis, violent conflict, or other extraordinary circumstance.
- **Emergency Management Plan:** A plan designed at the state or federal level to outline the government's response in the case of emergencies (i.e., natural disasters, pandemics, etc.). In many states, emergency management plans are required for various branches of government, outlining evacuation plans for government buildings, agencies, shelters, etc. This particular legislation is focused on developing emergency plans for corrections facilities.
- **Federal Bureau of Prisons:** The federal agency responsible for overseeing federal prisons.
- **Government Agency:** An office within the executive branch of government (i.e., reporting to the president or the governor) that is responsible for oversight or administration of specific government programs. Usually an agency is created or given power by a specific law or set of laws passed by the legislature. In addition to implementing those laws, many agencies are able to create specific regulations that outline the details of the areas of government they are responsible for.
- **Incarceration:** Confinement in a prison, jail, or penitentiary.
- **Institutional Review Board:** The group of individuals responsible for making decisions about the behavior of incarcerated individuals, and their eligibility for certain privileges within the institution.
- **Jurisdiction:** The official authority to make legal decisions, usually for a specific region or area of law. For example, the state government has jurisdiction to enforce laws related to driving cars, while the federal government does not.
- **Legislative or Judicial Review/Approval:** The right of the legislature or the courts to review decisions made by government agencies.
- **Legislature:** The branch of government responsible for writing and creating laws. At the federal level, the legislature is made up of two houses - the Senate and the House of Representatives, who both must pass a bill before it becomes law. Collectively, the Senate and the House are also referred to as "Congress". At the state level, legislatures often have one or two houses that function similarly to the federal legislature.
- **ListServ:** A list of emails of people who are interested in your cause.
- **Lobbying:** Seeking to influence a public official or legislator on a particular issue. The word lobbying originates from the practice of waiting to meet with legislators in the lobby of the legislative building. Both individual citizens and paid lobbyists are able to lobby public officials on behalf of their own interests.

- **Needs Assessment:** A review of the circumstances of each incarcerated person to understand support they will require upon transitioning out of incarceration.
 - **NFP:** A not-for-profit organization. Sometimes also referred to as NGO, or Non-governmental agency.
 - **PPE:** Personal protective equipment, such as masks, gloves, gowns, etc. that might be needed to ensure personal safety or health under various circumstances.
 - **Ombudsman:** A government official who listens to, investigates, and attempts to resolve citizen complaints against a government or specific government agency.
 - **Regulation:** A directive or rule created by a government agency, not by the legislature itself. Often, the statutes created by the legislature are vague and don't provide all of the practical details about how to enforce or implement a law, so agencies are empowered to create specific regulations to fill in these gaps. For example, Congress may pass a law stating that all federal prisons are responsible to report to the Congress annually on the demographics of their incarcerated population. Congress might then give power to the Federal Bureau of Prisons to determine how to make that happen in practice. Any rules created by the Bureau of Prisons - such as, "reports are due to our office by this date" - are regulation.
 - **Remanded:** Returned to prison or re-incarcerated after being released for a period of time.
 - **Solitary confinement:** The isolation of an incarcerated person in a separate cell as punishment, usually for an extended period of time.
 - **State Department of Corrections:** The state agency responsible for overseeing prisons and jails.
 - **Statute:** A written law that has been passed by a legislative body.
 - **Statute of limitations:** The period of time in which an individual may legally be tried or face punishment for a certain crime, or during which an individual may legally bring a claim against another individual or organization for being harmed. The period of time usually varies based on the state and the severity of the crime.
 - **Technical Violation:** A specific behavior that is not inherently criminal, but that may violate specific requirements of parole, probation, or pre-trial detention. Examples may include missing a court hearing, lack of employment, or missing curfew.
 - **Veto:** The ability for the executive (i.e., president or governor) to not sign a bill, so that it does not become law. At the federal level, a veto can then be overridden by a 2/3rds majority vote by both houses.
 - **Violent Institutional Infraction:** A behavior determined by an Institutional Review Board within a correctional facility to be violent and in violation of the facility's rules.
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COMMUNICATIONS AND VALUES-BASED MESSAGING

Using VPSA

Our country's current narrative around directly impacted people dehumanizes and creates stigma, stereotypes and fear. To confront that, we use a "values-based messaging" frame that

uplifts shared, common values, as a strategic way to tell our stories, spread our campaigns, and shift the narrative. To be effective communicators, these are strategies you should adopt.

We use a four-step communication format as a messaging strategy that's rooted in values, called **VPSA**, which stands for Value, Problem, Solution, Action.

- **Value:** Audiences are more receptive to our messages when we frame them by shared values, such as dignity, fairness, respect, equal rights and humanity. It is vitally important that we connect ALL of our arguments to universal values that we all care about.
- **Problem:** What are the systemic, institutional threats and barriers that stand in the way of achieving our values? It helps to use **two or three** short examples that highlight these systemic problems.
- **Solution:** We need to give people a clear path forward, that solves the problems, and uplifts our common values. Audiences need positive solutions, or they will often ignore messages. **Make sure the audience knows that solutions to these problems exist.**
- **Action:** *This is the strongest part of VPSA.* We need to leave people with a concrete, concise call to action: Join a rally, vote, call your representative, send a letter, etc. These actions need to be something your audience can imagine themselves doing. The clearer the call, the more likely our audience will take action.

VALUE

We have a responsibility to uplift the dignity and human rights of all people.

PROBLEM

But the lack of emergency planning in correctional facilities jeopardizes lives and is a violation of that responsibility.

- By neglecting the safety of millions currently trapped in correctional facilities, our society, elected officials and those currently in power, are showing how Black and Brown people are treated in the United States.
- What's more, failure to prevent avoidable deaths during inevitable moments of crisis weakens our commitment to our common values of human dignity, fairness and equal justice.

SOLUTION

The #JustUS policy recommendations address **all** the pipelines of the criminal justice system to act responsibly and save human lives in every kind of disaster, from a flood to a cyber attack.

ACTION

Go to jlusa.org, and write your legislators to demand they immediately adopt the #JustUS policy recommendations.

The strength of VPSA is it is versatile. It can be used in opinion-editorials, letters to editors, press interviews, during public and online rallies, and as consistent talking points. Using VPSA will help you strengthen your message, control your narrative, and move hearts, minds and policy.

PERSON FIRST LANGUAGE

Dehumanizing Language and What to Do:

At any point in which you have contact with an external party, whether it be a legislator or a journalist, they may use language that is dehumanizing. JLUSA has a toolkit on [person first](#) language. Sometimes these descriptors of directly impacted people are said with malice but often it is merely ignorance. When speaking with a legislator whom you are trying to persuade to join the campaign you often want to mirror back the appropriate terminology. If they keep saying “ex-con” you should respond with something that incorporates person-first language like “formerly incarcerated.” With a legislator and a journalist you can often use that moment to say actually the appropriate term is “X.” Expound and suggest that you appreciate the opportunity to

explain why it is so critical to use the appropriate language.

You should prepare yourself and any others for the possibility that when engaging with others they might hear something offensive. This is one of numerous advantages to advocating in groups. In the heat of the moment you or someone else may need to take a moment and collect yourself. If you google “instant ways to self-soothe” and other permutations of this search you may find some seconds long exercises that will ground you. Acknowledge that it is okay to feel upset. Ultimately you will get the most out of the exchange by de-escalating but also modeling better language and teaching the person what is appropriate to say and what is not. If there is continued harassment on their end it is okay to end the conversation early. They are likely not someone who is persuadable on the issue at hand. Advocacy is important, but your own well-being is most important!



LEGISLATIVE TEXT

Crafting a bill based on a policy recommendation is a long process, including drafting, negotiation, and legal review. Once you have identified public officials who are interested in taking up this issue (see [here](#) for how to identify potential targets), their office can help connect with resources to draft the legislative text. This politician will become the “Sponsor” of your bill. The [backgrounder](#) and [policy recommendations](#) are a great starting point for drafting the language for introduction of this legislation. More on moving a policy recommendation to a bill in the [Overview of the Legislative Process](#) section.



Help Inside the Legislature: The best place to start is contacting elected officials to determine how to move forward. Information on many of the states’ bill drafting manuals [here](#). Bill drafting can be performed by anyone and most elected officials will either work to craft the bill themselves, receive support from advocacy groups in that issue area, or send components of their legislation to a bill drafting commission that exists in US congress and many State legislatures. Bill Drafting Commissions adapt policy (the more detailed the better) to all the sections of existing law that require amendment or removal to enact the policy changes. A simple one line proposal can require changing dozens of existing statutes. These commissions are state

specific, so not all elected officials will have access to them as a resource. On the Federal level, the House of Representatives also has legal counsel that offers guidance on [bill drafting](#).

Help Outside the Legislature: When there is not a bill drafting commission or a Legislative Director with expertise, it is a common best practice to hire or seek volunteers from someone with a law background who can cross reference existing laws with this proposed legislation and verify it is consistent with the State constitution. Ideally you want a free resource and can find that through pro bono law firms (recommended for more sophisticated work) or legal clinics at law schools.

It's important to note that legislative text will go through many revisions throughout the legislative process. As the bill travels through committees and is debated, text may be added or removed that fundamentally alters the meaning of the bill. We, as advocates, need to follow the legislation after introduction to ensure that even with any changes, the text still addresses providing emergency management plans for prisons and jails and maintains our core values.

Example: Advocates worked to push protections for women who are incarcerated. Here is the resulting policy issue that has been put into [legislative text](#).

IDENTIFYING TARGETED LEGISLATORS

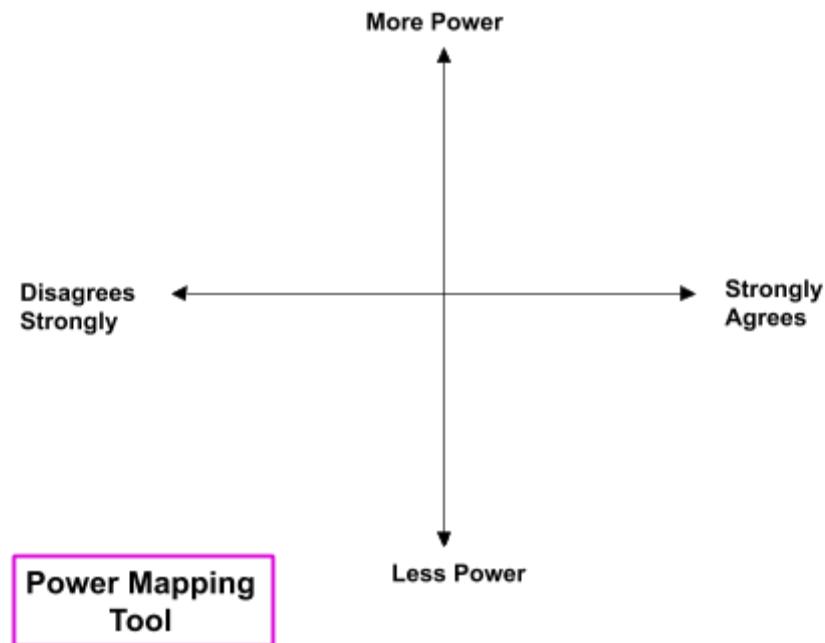
A target, in this section, refers to a legislator who you want to sponsor or co-sponsor your proposed legislation. To win this campaign, you will need to identify targets who have power, interest and connections to champion this effort. An effective tool in deciding your ideal bill sponsor in your state is completing a [power map](#).

Step 1: Identify potential legislative targets. These elected officials generally include:

- Those who have the power to fix the problem
 - For example: Those who chair committees in Congress or your state legislature, for example, Chair of the Public Health or Criminal Justice Committee
 - Leadership within Congress or your state legislature, such as the Speaker, Majority Leader, etc.
- Those who are geographically relevant to the issue;
 - Districts where there are prisons/jails
- Those who are working to fix the problem;
 - Legislators who have strong policy backgrounds in criminal justice reform, health, prisons/jails, etc.
- Those with whom you may already have pre-existing relationships
 - Have you previously worked with an office that can help you?

Your list may not be perfect; however, identifying the right elected official to start your campaign will help you in the long run to get this legislation into law.

Step 2: Research the list of elected officials you identified in Step 1. Do they agree or disagree with you on this issue? How much power do they have over this issue? How have they previously voted on legislation related to the #JustUs campaign?



Step 3: Plot your elected officials using the [power mapping graphic](#), based on the support and power of each elected official from your list.

Step 4: Identify your primary target. Based on the power map you have created, ideal targets will be in the top right quadrant - those with high power and high support for your position. These are the people you want to champion your bill.

Step 5: Map strong relationships connected to your bill sponsor. Are they influenced by any of the other names you have written down? Who can sway them? People who can sway them may be other organizations or allies. Additional legislators can help with co-sponsorship and support. These become your secondary targets.

Step 6: Revisit and revise. Power and support are constantly shifting, so regularly revisit and revise these lists as needed. You'll know when!

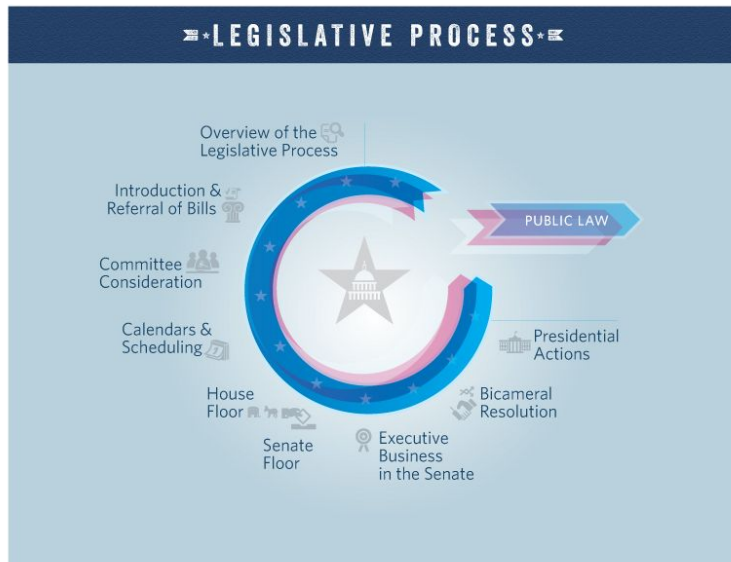
OVERVIEW OF THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

Introducing new legislation

Every law starts off as a policy idea, presented as a bill. While anyone can suggest a set of policy changes or a new rule, a bill must be sponsored by a legislator at their jurisdictional level. The legislator introduces the bill to the corresponding legislative body where it is discussed, revised,

and may eventually be voted into law. The following section will outline the process a bill must go through in order to become a law at both the federal and the state levels.

At the Federal Level:



❑ A policy idea is brought to a Congressperson who may be interested in **sponsoring** the legislation.

❑ The bill is then **introduced by a Congressperson** in either chamber of Congress (the House of Representatives or the Senate).

❑ From here, the bill will be **assigned to a committee** which is deemed to best fit the subject matter of the bill. The assignment is carried out by the Rules Committee, a group

who also determines the terms on which bills are later debated by Congress. While in committee the bill will be discussed, revised, and eventually voted on. The committee can decide not to continue the process, can vote the bill forward, or can send the bill to a subcommittee to be further researched and revised. Ordinarily from here, the bill will pass on to whichever chamber of congress it was first introduced to.

❑ Here, the bill will again be debated and members of Congress will vote on whether the bill should pass onto the other chamber of Congress. If the bill passes a majority vote (more than 50%), it will be sent either from the House to the Senate or from the Senate to the House where it will undergo the same process. If the bill is changed while in committee in the second chamber of Congress, it will have to be sent back to the first chamber to be debated and voted on again. Either chamber can send the bill back to committee to be adjusted as many times as they choose. Often, after different versions of the bill are passed in the House and Senate, a committee with members from both chambers will meet to work out a final version of the bill. It is not until both the House of Representatives and the Senate vote the same version of the bill forward that it ends up on the desk of the President.

❑ The President has three choices in how to respond to a bill: the bill can be **signed**, **vetoed**, or **pocket vetoed**.

❑ If signed, the bill is passed and is successful in becoming federal law.

❑ If vetoed, the bill returns to Congress. If two-thirds of both the House of Representatives and the Senate vote to overturn the veto, the bill will become federal law; otherwise, the bill will die and will not become law.

❑ If the President tables the bill and doesn't sign it (referred to as a pocket veto), there are two possible outcomes: if Congress is in session, then after ten days the bill will become law (so long as Congress does not adjourn before the end of that

ten-day period). Otherwise, unless the bill is signed by the President, the bill will die.



At the state level:

The legislative process at the state level is generally similar to the federal process, but it varies from state to state - for example, some states have only one chamber, and some state legislatures are only in session for part of the year. Most states detail their legislative process on their state website. The best place is to start by visiting the website “your state”.gov (i.e., ca.gov, utah.gov) and finding the section about “Government.” You can also google “your state” “year of interest” “legislative calendar and/or session”

- ❑ Similar to the federal level, the law-making process begins when a member of the state’s legislative body acts as a sponsor for the bill and introduces it to the legislature. In most states it is the rules committee that then decides which committee ought to consider the bill, as well as the terms on which the bill will later be deliberated on by the legislative body.
- ❑ Once in committee, bills are discussed and debated. In many states, during this process committees will allow limited time for **public hearings**. During this allotted time, members of the community can share comments and provide testimony either in support or in opposition to the bill. The nature of these hearings in regard to when and how they accept testimony (how far in advance one must submit written testimony, for example) vary from state to state, and even from committee to committee. You should try to testify in front of as many of these as possible. To find out when they occur you will need to routinely sign up for alerts from your State government website or social media accounts connected to the legislative body. See [example](#).
- ❑ After hearing public comments, committees will decide whether they want to add amendments to the bill, and then will decide whether to send it to a floor vote, send it to another committee, or kill the bill. If the bill is non-controversial, it may be grouped with other legislation to be passed via a consent calendar.

- ❑ Once back in the legislature (i.e., when the bill has moved from a limited committee to be considered by the entire legislative body), the bill will again be **discussed and debated**. After debate, the bill will be put to a vote and will either pass or fail.
- ❑ If the bill passes in states with more than one chamber of their legislature, it will move on to the second chamber to repeat the process. In states with only one chamber, this step is skipped entirely.
 - ❑ Often, a bill will go through a number of public hearings throughout this process, creating multiple opportunities for community members to testify.
- ❑ Once it has cleared the legislature, the bill will land on the Governor’s desk. The Governor will have the same three options available to them as the President: they can **sign, veto,** or **pocket veto** a bill. Like at the federal level, a vetoed bill can usually be overturned by a two-thirds vote.

Helpful information for both Federal and State Legislation:

- ❑ It’s important to check the legislative calendar for your elected officials. Are they currently in session?
- ❑ You can set legislative alerts on both the federal and state level using key words. Potential words/phrases to use for those alerts “emergency management plan”, “prisons”, “jails”, “COVID”, “Coronavirus”, etc. Here are some tips on google alert and search best practices:
 - ❑ Use google alerts: <https://www.google.com/alerts>
 - ❑ Follow hyperlinks to discover new articles and examples
 - ❑ Google search connectors: use the following terms in your search
 - ❑ Put a phrase in quotes to search for the exact phrase.
 - ❑ Ex: “emergency planning prison” vs emergency planning prison
 - ❑ To exclude a term from your searches use “-term”
 - ❑ Ex: bears vs bears -chicago
 - ❑ Ex: prisoner release -covid
 - ❑ AND searches for the combination of two terms connected
 - ❑ Ex: Labor AND jails
 - ❑ OR searches for results with the term on either side of the OR
 - ❑ Note: this is especially useful when something is called by both names
 - ❑ Ex: COVID OR coronavirus
 - ❑ For a longer list see this [guide](#)
- ❑ **Links for State Legislatures:**
 - Alaska: <http://w3.akleg.gov/index.php>
 - Arizona: <https://www.azleg.gov/>
 - California: <https://www.assembly.ca.gov/> & <https://www.senate.ca.gov/>
 - Delaware: <https://legis.delaware.gov/>
 - Kentucky: <https://legislature.ky.gov/Pages/index.aspx>
 - Michigan: <https://www.legislature.mi.gov/>
 - New Jersey: <https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/>

New York: <https://nyassembly.gov/> & <https://www.nysenate.gov/>

Ohio: <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/>

Pennsylvania: <https://www.legis.state.pa.us/>

South Carolina: <https://www.scstatehouse.gov/>

Wisconsin: <https://legis.wisconsin.gov/>

**If your state is not listed, simply Google “[Your State] state legislature”*

LEGISLATION FAQs/TALKING POINTS

The following bullet points are listed as a framework for discussing the importance of developing emergency management plans for people who are currently incarcerated. This list is just a stepping stone to a broader dialogue - as you lead discussions with elected officials, other advocates, and community members, be sure to tie in your personal stake in this legislation - why does this issue matter to you? Additionally, personalize your message to your audience - why should they care about emergency management plans?

This culminates in the following formula:

Personal Narrative + Talking Points/Research & Data + Specific Ask = Persuasive and Effective Advocacy

Personal Narrative

Our personal accounts—what we survived and how, what these experiences mean to us, and what we know now that we did not know before—are what we mean by “stories.” Our stories/ personal narrative can be thought of as the depiction of the problem or solution.

- What is the desired outcome of the communication?
- What do you want to illustrate? How can a story enhance it?
- Is there a part of the story you want to focus on or a part you want to avoid? You do not owe anyone your entire story or anything you do not want to share.

Talking Points

Printing/circulating these [talking points](#) to advocates who are joining us in this fight not only gives them key information about the issue, but it unites our movement, ensuring all advocates can stay on message and be a unified voice for change.

In addition to these talking points, researching state-specific facts around emergency management plans and prisons/jails can be helpful in tailoring your message to your local elected officials. This list is just a stepping stone to a broader dialogue.

- ❑ The arrival of COVID-19 has only exposed the **systemic inequities and racism** in this country’s incarceration and detention policies.

- ❑ We have a responsibility to uplift the dignity and human rights of everyone -- but the lack of emergency planning in correctional facilities is a violation of that responsibility. The country's commitment to protect the most vulnerable depends on us working together.
- ❑ In June, we launched the **#JustUs campaign** calling on legislators to enact proactive solutions to protect the human beings behind bars during COVID-19's second wave and other forthcoming disasters.
- ❑ We have outlined recommendations for immediate emergency preparedness plans for those in the criminal justice system. These policy recommendations could lead to potentially historic legislation in every state in the country.
- ❑ This is a nation-wide call for policymakers to **decarcerate** the United States by immediately adopting our federal and state-based policy recommendations to save the lives of incarcerated people during any type of major crisis or emergency, which again, is especially timely given an anticipated COVID-19 second wave this year.
- ❑ By neglecting the safety of millions of people currently trapped in correctional facilities, our society, elected officials and those currently in power, are showing - once again - how Black and Brown people are treated in the United States.
- ❑ This type of systemic racism is the result of **the generational legacy of slavery**, and changing past policies is critical to decarcerating the United States. They were sentenced to time, not death.
- ❑ The #JustUs campaign's policy recommendations address the pipelines of the criminal justice system -- from law enforcement to courts to department of corrections -- to act in sync, to act responsibly and save human lives in every kind of disaster, from a flood to a cyber attack.
- ❑ Failure to prevent avoidable deaths during these inevitable moments of crisis weakens our commitment to our common values of human dignity, fairness, and equal justice.
- ❑ During Hurricane Katrina, officials did not have an evacuation plan for correctional facilities, but had one for the Humane Society.
- ❑ Since 2010, the US has performed 321 executions. COVID-19 deaths among incarcerated people since March 2020 have exceeded this number, despite the fact that none of these individuals were sentenced to death.
- ❑ To learn more, visit our website at jlusa.org.

Specific Ask

Your 'ask' is a clear, tailored request or recommendation for what needs to happen to address the problem. The ask may be different for different audiences. What action do you want listeners to take? The ask can be thought of offering actions to promote a solution or the implementation of that solution.

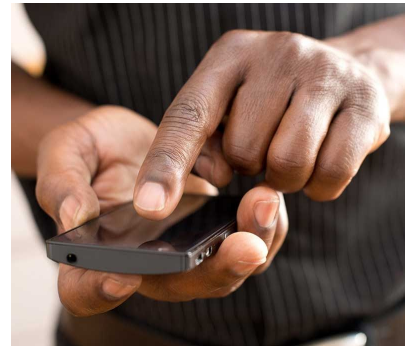
- What is the purpose of the argument?
- What action do you want people to take?
- Try to give a concrete action that they can picture themselves doing:
 - Guiding Questions and Things to Consider
 - Who is your audience?
 - Why should someone care about this issue?
 - What are the common positions on these issues held by those in power?

SCHEDULING LEGISLATIVE MEETINGS

Requesting Your Meeting

Call the office and request to speak with the scheduler and/or person responsible for policy around criminal justice.

Script: Hello, my name is _____ and I am calling from _____. I would like to schedule time to speak with (Elected Official's Name) and/or someone whose policy area is related to criminal justice and/or public health and/or disaster planning. I am working to introduce legislation on the need for emergency management plans for prisons and jails in our state and nationally. COVID has demonstrated the need but we need to be proactive for this pandemic and the next inevitable disaster.



Suggest specific times and dates for your meeting.

Make sure they know that you are a constituent, if you live within their district. If you are not from their district it would be beneficial to find someone from that district to make the call and attend the meeting with you. If this is not a viable option, it's OKAY! Still attempt to schedule a meeting.

Many times, schedulers will ask for an email with all the details of your request. Include one pagers and/or policy recommendations, restate the time/date of meeting request and other important details about the #JustUs campaign.

Increasingly, we are seeing legislators use [online meeting forms](#) - complete the details and follow up with the office within a few days to confirm receipt.

Prepare for Your Meeting

- Bring one-pagers, [policy recommendations](#) and the [backgrounder](#) as materials that you can leave with your elected official.
- Decide who will attend the meeting. Keep it small. Bring 4-5 people who represent different groups that are invested in the legislation like formerly incarcerated people,

family members of those currently incarcerated, doctors, religious leaders, public health officials, emergency management personnel, corrections staff, etc.

- Agree on talking points with the group that will be in attendance at the meeting.
- Plan out the flow of the meeting. It is easy to be nervous or intimidated by speaking with elected officials, especially about issues that you are passionate about. Additionally, time can be limited, so laying out your talking points and who will address what can keep the meeting on track. You may want to assign attendees to some of the following roles:
 - Conversation starter
 - Photo taker
 - Share a personal story
 - Share the data and research behind the #JustUs campaign
 - Closer - make the final ask of the legislator
- Research the elected official prior to your meeting. Take a look at their voting record specific to criminal justice issues.

During the Meeting

- Be prompt and patient. Elected officials run on very tight schedules. Be sure to show up on time for your appointment, and be patient - it is not uncommon for legislators to be late or to have your meeting interrupted by other business.
- Keep it short and focused! On average, you will have fifteen to twenty minutes with an elected official/staff person. Stick to talking points and deliver your message clearly.
- Bring up any personal, professional or political connections to the elected official that you may have. Use the opening of the meeting to thank the legislator for any work they have done i.e. votes, letters, legislation. You always want the legislator or staff to realize you know a great deal about them or their boss.
- Make it conversational. Yes, there is a short window, however engaging the member or staffer in a dialogue helps to make your pitch feel less like a salesperson and more genuine.
- Stick to your talking points! Stay on topic, and back them up with printed materials that you will leave with your elected official.
- Provide personal stories and examples of the havoc that COVID or other natural disasters have created within prisons and jails. Always try to tie the issue back to whatever that legislator is trying to promote as part of their "brand." You can often find this on their website or campaign page (which reflects how they want to be seen). For example if they champion that they fight for fiscal responsibility speak to how this aligns with their vision because of the cost-savings benefits.
- If you don't know the answer to a question, it's okay! It's better to say, "I can get back to you with that specific information" rather than giving inaccurate information that damages your credibility. Following up, usually via email, gives you the chance to stay relevant and shows your dedication.
- Set deadlines for a response. Legislators may not be ready to make a full commitment in your meeting with them. If they have to think about it, or if you are meeting with a staff

member, ask when you should check back in to find out what your legislator intends to do about your request. Set a clear timeline for when this will happen.

- ❑ Make sure your ask of the elected official is clear. “We want you to sponsor legislation, including bill drafting and introduction, that will help protect people currently in prisons/jails. Will your office commit to making this a reality?”

After the Meeting

- ❑ Right after the meeting, debrief with your group on their thoughts as to how the meeting ran. Discuss what follow-ups need to occur and who can help support you with that information.
 - ❑ Send a personal thank you letter to legislative members/staffers with whom you’ve met.
 - ❑ Follow up, within a week, with any requested materials and information (the faster the better).
 - ❑ If the elected official or staff member doesn't meet the deadline, ask him or her to set another deadline. Be persistent and flexible!
 - ❑ If you are meeting with a member of Congress or State Legislators, let JustLeadership know what you learned during your meeting by sending an e-mail to Madeline Firkser madeline@jusa.org. Knowing what arguments your member used, what issues are important to him or her, and what positions he or she took will help us make our #JustUs Campaign more effective!
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BUILDING ORGANIZATIONAL POWER

Getting People Involved

Gather endorsements: Elected officials are innately aware of the public’s interest - that’s what we pay them to do! Creating a statement of support and asking those in your network to sign can show the large and diverse body of constituents who are interested in the issue.

- ❑ **Craft a Statement of Support/Advocates Sign-On Letter**
 - ❑ Describe the issue in a few sentences, using details that evoke an emotional reaction in the reader.
 - ❑ Share why this is important, and connect it to other well-known issues or movements, if possible. Make the issue timely and relevant to the prevailing narrative.
 - ❑ Paint a picture of an effective alternative - what kind of change is possible, and what would that look like?
 - ❑ End with a call to action, including specific details about how interested people can get involved. The call to action may be different depending on where the bill is in the [process](#). (i.e. has it been introduced in committee, has it moved to the floor?)
 - ❑ Include bill number and bill Sponsor (elected official)

- ❑ Create a [Google Form](#) you can send to advocates and organizations for quick sign-ons. The link will take you to a sample sign on.
- ❑ Share the document with individuals and organizations who you think might be willing to publicly support your position.
- ❑ Use your Statement of Support, including the signatures, to disseminate to Elected Officials' offices.

- ❑ **More on Sign-on Letters:** These are letters you can write or use language from #JustUs campaign materials to garner support in two specific ways:
 - ❑ Advocate-led
 - ❑ List of recommendations with partner organizations signed on
 - ❑ Shows sector support behind recommendations and a clear message
 - ❑ Can be circulated to target elected officials
 - ❑ Legislator-led: (Sometimes called "Dear Colleague letters:) Must use a legislator who supports your legislation to get this started. They will then help do the work internally to get others to sign on.
 - ❑ List of recommendations with other elected officials signed on
 - ❑ Legislator will work to garner sign ons-you may be able to work from the outside to push other legislators to sign on as well

- ❑ Examples:
 - ❑ [Take Action](#): Close Rikers Island Campaign
 - ❑ [Sample Letter](#): Public Statement on Coronavirus and Mass Incarceration

Leverage connections from your own network: Have you worked in coalition with other organizations? Reaching out to them and getting them involved can help maintain and uplift your relationships. Sometimes it can be as easy as picking up the phone:



- **Look at your contacts list** and send friends, family and key stakeholders a quick text or even a call to tell them what you are working on and how you can use their support.
- **Cold call elected officials' offices** and talk about your issue with a Legislative Aid or Policy Director. This can help get your issue on their radar and create an opening for future interactions or partnership. Oftentimes, they will ask for a follow up email with details. You can follow up by requesting an official meeting to discuss further.
- **Email** use listservs and coalition groups to post information regarding the #JustUs campaign and how people can get involved.
 - Great way to disseminate your social media toolkit.
 - Search: Use your email correspondences as a jumping off point to find stakeholders who may be interested in helping to push your issue. A quick search through your emails can sometimes reveal people you would not have previously considered.

Get creative! As you build your momentum, feel free to try anything - from contacting friends and family to cold-calling phone lists. Your personal contacts list of emails and phone numbers can be the greatest tool in bringing awareness to this campaign. Above, we mentioned getting a list of organizational endorsements; you can do the same with your personal friends and family. Using the same statement of support you can create a sign on letter or petition to help drive awareness of your issue.

To Coalition, or Not to Coalition

What is a coalition? Coalitions are alliances of people/groups/organizations who have a shared vision of a policy issue. Working in coalition is an effective way for advocacy organizations to share and maximize resources to achieve a common goal. Coalitions draw on the expertise of partner organizations, build people power and speak with a clear, unified voice to enact change. Examples of coalitions are: [#CloseRikers](#), [startSMART](#), and [Justice for Women COVID-19 Task Force](#).

Would developing a new coalition or including the #JustUs campaign in an existing campaign build power?

As you weigh your options, a few questions to consider might be:

- Would a broader network of advocates help to get this bill on your legislator's radar?
- Can other organizations help to amplify this message through various means? (using listservs, social media, increasing turnout, making calls, etc.)
- Are you able/willing to share the workload of meetings, outreach and education with others?

Identify Appropriate Organizations/Folks to Join Your Coalition

For the most part, a diverse and broad coalition group can help push your issue. However, it is imperative to include some of the following:

- **Directly Impacted Individuals/People:** Those who are closest to the issue you are speaking on - including people who were formerly incarcerated, family members, etc.
- **Organizations Working For People Who Have Been Impacted By the Justice System:** Legal Aid, Organizations helping returning citizens, housing organizations, faith-based organizations, etc.
- **Public Health Experts:** Department of Health, academics, etc.
- **Emergency Management Experts**
- **Civic Leaders:** Religious leaders, business owners, community boards, etc.
- **Legal Organizations:** Reach out to legal organizations that are working on changes to the court, changes to the criminal justice system, etc.

As you work to identify partner organizations, googling past testimonies at the state legislature level may help identify others who are doing similar work. You can also use the [Coalition Stakeholder Tool](#) to think through organizations that could potentially benefit your campaign.

Choose the Structure

It's important to think about how you will structure your coalition. Will it be ad-hoc, a fiscal sponsorship, or a 501(c)(3)/(c)(4)? Again, this is up to you and what fits your community. Take a look below for a quick overview of each option.

- Ad-Hoc Coalition:** A very specific type of coalition of groups, one which forms for a single discrete issue fight. Ad-hoc issue coalitions are characterized by low levels of formalization and high levels of autonomy for the coalitions' members. They are established in the short to medium term for the duration of a single legislative or regulatory debate. While some issue coalitions may last longer, they remain a coalition of autonomous groups, and do not establish their own direct membership or organizational structure. There is usually a coalition leader organizing the efforts of the members, regular meetings of the coalition members, joint lobbying actions such as joint letters, advertisements or press conferences and very often an official name for the coalition and even letterhead and a secretariat acting as the headquarters of the coalition. Ad-hoc coalitions are most often composed of different types of groups or associations representing different sets of interests.
- Fiscal Sponsorship:** Fiscal sponsorship generally entails a nonprofit organization (the "fiscal sponsor") agreeing to provide administrative services and oversight to, and assume some or all of the legal and financial responsibility for, the activities of groups or individuals engaged in work that relates to the fiscal sponsor's mission. This entails agreeing with the funding nonprofit organization on certain deliverables to help with funding. Identifying organizations that you know have a large budget and who are similarly aligned is a good place to start. For more information on fiscal sponsorship, read [here](#).
- 501(c)(3)/(c)(4):** Unlike the other two options outlined above, creating a 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(4) organization entails creating an independent nonprofit organization, including completing new legal filings related to tax status. These options allow you to create a campaign under a 501 designation, which may further your campaign goals. Take a look at the chart below for a quick overview of the differences in designation.

501(c)(3)s	501(c)(4)s	501(c)(5) &(6)s
501(c)(3) organizations are commonly referred to as charitable organizations Public charities, the most common type of 501(c)(3)s, are required to devote their resources to educational, religious, scientific, or other charitable purposes. 501(c)(3) s are permitted to engage in only limited lobbying activities and are prohibited from engaging in any political activity	501(c)(4)s are organizations that are not for profit and must be operated exclusively to promote social welfare. 501(c)(4)s can engage in unlimited lobbying activities and some limited political activities. Contributions to 501(c)(4)s are not tax deductible. 501(c)(4)s can be formed and dissolved quickly, so they may be an option for short term goals.	501(c)(5)s organizations typically cover labor (unions), agricultural or horticultural entities. The rules that apply to 501(c)(3) organizations when working with 501(c)(4)s are the same as when they work with 501(c)(5)s and 501(c)(6)s, so any references to coalition activities with 501(c)(4)s would also apply to work with 501(c)(5) and 501(c)(6) organizations.

<p>in support of or in opposition to a political candidate or party. A 501(c)(3) organization may engage in some lobbying, but too much lobbying activity risks loss of tax-exempt status.</p>		
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Create Infrastructure

- ***Funding:*** Where will your coalition get funding from? If you developed a coalition modeled on fiscal sponsorship or 501(c) status, you may be getting funding from another organizations, grants, or donations. However, those funds may not cover all of your costs - so you may need to be creative in finding and determining your funding streams. A few funding options might include the following:
 - **Fees or dues:** Each member organization must pledge a certain dollar amount to stay involved in the coalition (often based on the size or budget of the organization). This should be determined at the outset of an organization joining your coalition.
 - **Fundraising/Donations:** Asking individuals, business and other organizations to help support your cause. Each state has its own requirements regarding charitable fundraising which should be considered when going this route.
 - **Alternatives to Money:** Are there member organizations who have office supplies, digital platforms, or volunteers who can help with your campaign? Are organizations willing to “donate” one of their staff to help with your campaign? This is a way to offset costs and keep people involved without a monetary lift.

- ***Communication within the Coalition:***
 - ListSers - Google Group, Mail Chimp, etc. (allow people to opt-in)
 - Slack
 - Calls/text messaging
 - Meetings - how often? Is there a standing meeting?
 - Social Media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)
 - [Sample sign up sheet](#)

- ***External Communication:***
 - Ownership of coalition lists - how will member information be used/shared?
 - Media Requests - who makes them?
 - Talking Points - Where are they stored for easy coalition access?
 - Social Media Toolkits - who edits?

Responsibilities Within Coalition

Once you've decided on the overall structure, internally how will your coalition make decisions?



- **Steering committee:** A smaller group of consistently invested stakeholders making decisions in the best interest of the campaign. This committee usually meets more frequently than the broader coalition to strategize, ensure deliverables, and make high-level decisions for the coalition.
- **Working Groups:** These are groups created within a coalition based on area need. A committed member of your coalition (someone who shows up to meetings, participates, etc.) should chair the working group. Coalitions usually divide working groups in primarily two ways: (1) based on different segments or elements of an issue, such as Public Health or communications with the Department of Corrections, usually focused on developing talking points or policy recommendations; (2) based on categories of needed infrastructure, such as communications, leg strategy, fundraising, rapid response, etc.
- **Decision-Making Process:** Determine from the outset how the coalition will operate when making decisions - by consensus-building, or by majority vote. Consensus decision-making allows for everyone to have a vote, ensures buy-in from coalition members, and allows all stakeholders the ability to voice concerns. Building consensus also takes more time, especially in a particularly diverse coalition. On the other hand, majority voting is a fast way to reach an agreement within the group, but may leave some coalition members feeling dissatisfied if their perspectives are not equally heard or valued. For more info on the differences between the two, check out the resources [here](#).
- **Plan for 11th-hour negotiations:** Early in the coalition process, spend time discussing the following questions about negotiation and priorities. Determining the following questions at the outset of your coalition will help if/when you need to make difficult decisions concerning your campaign. Additionally, having the answers to the following questions will help if/when conflict arises within the coalition.
 - What are you willing to give away?
 - What are your non-negotiables?
 - How can governance structure help define the process for deciding what trade-offs or sacrifices we can make to move the legislation forward?
 - What is our conflict resolution process?

PLANNING DIRECT ACTIONS & ADVOCACY/LOBBY DAY

When trying to mobilize support for an issue, two key tools at your disposal are direct action and advocacy/lobby days. Here are a few of the key differences between these events.

Category	Direct Action	Advocacy/Lobby Day
Type of event	A strike, rally, march, or other form of public protest.	An event to connect with elected officials directly and explain or advocate for specific policy or legislation.
Typical Purpose	To garner public support and interest in an issue. Media, press and amplification of message is the goal.	To ask elected officials directly for support/sponsorship around specific policies and legislative action.
Type of Message	Broad, usually condensed in a slogan or sound-bite	Specific, articulating policy proposals and support for specific bills.

How to Plan a Direct Action:

Direct Action campaigns are effective ways of mobilizing public support, garnering media attention, and sharing a broad message to a large number of people. Such events also take a lot of planning and effort to do right - including being realistic and practical with what to expect throughout the process. Keep in mind that Direct Actions may not be the best forum to get into the nitty gritty of a campaign - focus your efforts on sharing a short, memorable message, and use the momentum from the direct action to follow up with additional details to those who express interest after the event.

The four phases of putting together a direct action campaign are: Planning, Preparation, Execution (the Day Of) and Follow Up.

Planning

Planning starts big, by articulating the purpose and message of the event.

Goals: What are you trying to accomplish? Are the goals concrete and tangible?

Staffing: Develop decision-making structure (Spokescouncil, Tactical Team) to ensure someone is accountable and the point of contact for all major issues. Be sure to exchange cell phone numbers.

ID all "staffing" needs for action

- Team/march leaders
- Police Liaisons
- Peace Keeper, Security, Traffic
- Leaf/One Pager distributors
- Media person
- Organizational spokesperson
- Set up crew
- Clean up crew
- Drivers
- Chant leaders
- Prop distribution & collection
- Equipment distribution & collection
- Person appointment for general information
- Get out of jail people/Bail Resources
- Medical Team
- Tabling at Rally Point- Joining the movement
- Triage Coordinator
- Snacks & water
- Photo Team

Target: Who are you trying to impact/move? Do you have an appointment? Have you confirmed in advance? Have you selected someone to take notes during the action and write the confirmation letter for sending to the target?

Message/Demands: What is your message? Are there other audiences besides the target? What do you want them to know, and what do you want them to do? Do the message and target fit together in a way that is easily understandable? Can it be summed up in a "slogan"? What is your slogan, theme, sound bite? Does it fit on a banner? Are your demands clear and simple? Do you have several fallback demands?

Mobilization: How many people can you mobilize? Who is coming? From where? What is the recruitment, reminder, and follow-up plan? Is there a good turnout plan for the action, including last-minute reminder phone calls? How many do you need for the action to be successful? How will you change the plan if you don't have enough people? Are the appropriate people assigned to coalition working groups?

Scenario: Will your action be both *fun* and based on real power? Is everyone in your group comfortable with the plan? Will the plan be outside the experience of the target? Are you going outside the "official channels?" What will happen? What does it look like? Is the action symbolic or disruptive? Is it public or secret? How does it begin and end? What happens in the middle? Does the action scenario communicate your message without words? Is the action or visuals enough to achieve your goals? Have you calculated how you will demonstrate your power? Can you design the action so that the visuals or action alone will communicate it? What time are you planning the action? Is this a time people can come? Are you anticipating arrests? If so, is the action early in the morning to minimize the possibility of people staying in jail overnight?



Action Site: How does your action site relate to your target? If there are multiple action sites which you are considering, which best communicates your message and will accommodate your action? (Some things to consider in choosing an action site include size, visibility, access, proximity to roads, phones, and other utilities, fences, security, sidewalks, public space nearby, parking, tenants, etc.) Have you scouted the building and made a floor plan? Do you know where to find: elevator and stairs, bathrooms, payphone, parking or nearest transit stops, the target's office? Can the site accommodate disabled members? Are there security cameras? How big is the sidewalk? is there a public space nearby? Are there parking garages? Who are the other tenants? What is the weather supposed to be like on the day of the event? All of these factors should impact your choice of venue.

Preparation

The preparation phase is all about the details - accounting for all of the possibilities, creating back-up plans, and mobilizing volunteers in preparation for the big day.

● **Schedule:** Even for a short event, start by breaking it down with the following questions:

- What happens when?
- Who needs to be involved in that?
- What materials or resources are needed for that activity?
- How many volunteers are needed to perform this activity?

Plan the entire day from pack-up to set-up to clean-up.

● **Communicating Details:**

Ahead of the event, email participants with important information about the area where you will be, roles, expectations, bail, and any other relevant details.

- Where exactly are you meeting?
- Where will the action take place?

- Is it a march, or an in-place event? If a march, what route are you taking?
 - Where should people go if they arrive late?
 - Is it a virtual rally or car protest?
 - What should participants plan to bring? (Water, signs, snacks, masks, etc.)
- **Legal Matters/Police:** Coordinate whether permits are needed, and who will be the liaison with police or other elected officials on the day of the action. If there is an issue, who should be contacted? (Are we writing this cell number on our skin with a sharpie?)
 - **Security/Traffic Plan:** What is needed? Who will coordinate, train, recruit? What are police plans and contingencies? How will you protect participants, or deal with provocateurs? Be sure to consider the status of individuals who will participate in your event - are they on probation or parole? Are they allowed to actively participate in the protest? What would their role be to ensure their safety?
 - **Program:** How are we communicating? Will there be speakers? Music? Dance? Poetry? Participatory activities? Do we have the equipment necessary to be heard in the venue of choice? Who is bringing that? Who is setting that up and taking it down?
 - **Publicity:** Do your best to get the word out massively – depending on your budget, you may rely on fliers, postcards, webpages, emails, posters, ads, social media, banners, etc.
 - Tone: what public attention should be amplified about the issue?
 - How will you mobilize volunteers to hand out fliers, hang posters, or make phone calls?
 - Have you created a flier or postcard publicizing the action? (Note: JLUSA fliers have specific branding, please contact Michael Paul Jackson at michael@jlusa.org for help and questions).
 - **Headcount:** How many people are coming? Do you have an effective way to get a realistic count? Do you have the resources to support a larger-than-expected turnout? What options do you have to amplify your energy if the crowd itself is smaller than you planned?
 - **Media:** How do we publicize our issues and message? If you want the media, have they been notified? Have you:
 - Sent a press advisory, two days to a week ahead of time?
 - Made advance calls to reporters pitching your story and giving background?
 - Identified and trained spokespeople to talk with the media at the action itself?
 - Called assignment editors the day before the action?
 - Prepared a release or press packet (including background materials) for distribution on the day of the action?
 - Made sure that anyone who shows up is comfortable with being in pictures, etc. used to promote the campaign?

For sample media releases, checkout [JLUSA's Media](#) page or use this [sample document](#) to create your own.

Day Of Your Event

If you've planned and prepared ahead of time, the day of the event should be all about executing - mobilizing volunteers, and managing a checklist so you don't forget a thing.

Logistics: Here is a simple checklist of all the things you might need - but be sure to customize to your specific event!

- Signs, Banners, etc. about the issue
- 6ft. apart signs to ensure proper social distancing
- Flags
- Day Of leaflet
- Sound System
- Bullhorns and batteries
- Sign In sheets, clip boards, pens
- Noisemakers, whistles, drums
- Visual props
- Legal instructions (i.e., legal permits, guidelines for events)
- Chant sheets (Practice the call and response and have a chant leader)
- Cameras, film
- Food, drinks, snacks
- Water bottles
- Transportation (busses, vans, cars) & routes for drivers. Be specific about where you will meet, start time and departing time
- Set Up crew
- Cleanup crew
- T-shirts (are we looking the same?)
- Day-of Press packets
- Communication equipment (radios, phones)
- Bail money, lawyers to contact in case is needed
- PPE - Masks, gloves, hand sanitizer, cleaning wipes
- First aid kits
- Stickers or other "swag" to give away
- Hand warmers (if a cold day)
- Tents/canopies (for shade/sign-in booths)

Props: Make your issue visible and tangible with meaningful props. A picture is worth a thousand words. Ensure your props are large enough to be seen and understood at a distance.

Training: Has the group selected who will present information at the action? Are people prepared for their roles? Do they have talking points? Do you have a cheat sheet so that folks can disseminate information using the same messaging, and with any other information volunteers might need?



Banners: how to bring attention to the issue/tone (displaying following guidelines of safe distancing)

Communications: how will we communicate during the action? what equipment will be needed, who has what, who will be handling equipment, protocols.

Coordination/Prep: prep meetings, training, communications, review maps, getting everybody on board and prepped before the action. A call rehearsal for the spokesperson and the participants?

Debrief: Do you know who will debrief the action with participants and where the debriefing will occur?

Follow up:

The follow-up after an event is almost as important as the event itself. How do you plan to capitalize on the momentum built by the direct action? Did the event itself garner you new volunteers, new funds, or new high-level endorsements? How do you show thanks to key participants and ensure those newcomers stay engaged?

What went well? What went wrong or could be improved? How participants feel, their take? Any future actions? Ex. Follow up emails with representatives, reporters/journalists. Any future actions? Future collaborations? New ideas for recruitment?



Planning an Advocacy/Lobby Day:

Most elected officials want to make sure that they understand the consequences and benefits of any particular piece of legislation on their constituency. Organizing a lobby/advocacy day enables voices from different parts of the state to be represented, shows people power and provides an opportunity for education and understanding. Incorporating legislative meetings with a press conference/rally will only help to amplify your message. Remember, the appearance of power is power. Just a note on 501(c)(3)s and lobbying: these organizations may engage in some **lobbying**, but too much **lobbying** activity risks loss of **tax-exempt status**. Please check with state agencies around lobbying limits.

So you want to plan an advocacy day. Helpful tools in planning your day:

[Sample MOCHA Chart](#)

Below is a timeline of planning your Advocacy/Lobby Day. For a printable checklist just click the link here: [PDF](#)

8-12 Weeks Prior to Your Event

- Determine the format of your advocacy day
 - Rally? Press Conference?
 - Are there high demand speakers you want to be present?
 - Do you want Elected Officials to Speak?
- Identify if there is a reservation system for areas within legislative office buildings, capital buildings, executive offices, etc. where your group will be holding a rally/press conference.
- Determine if you will offer transportation. Do you provide public transport money, organize a bus, car caravan?
- Order T-Shirts/Banners/Swag
- Advocacy Day Sign Up and Social Media

4-6 Weeks Prior to Your Event

- Begin to schedule appointments with legislators- KEEP A TRACKING SHEET! Buy into the 3x3 mode of follow up-3 calls and 3 emails-a total of SIX touchpoints.
- Make sure you are aware of any special needs of participants.
- Find a meeting location and arrange lunch, if applicable.
- Assemble advocacy day information packets
- Prepare a 30-minutes to one-hour training session on expectations of the day

1-Week Prior to Your Event

- Participants: schedule, maps, summary of issues with talking points, lobby day report form-feedback from meetings/important convos/follow-ups needed
 - Have a tool for the lobby day that will help members identify their elected officials. (headshots)
- Legislative Packets: one pager, supporting evidence, sign on letter, card/contact details (always bring extra)
- Organize Roles of Participants-speakers, team leaders, media, etc.
 - Ask participants to bring homemade signs-be careful about building specific regulations on bringing in a sign pole, materials, etc.
- Uplift Advocacy Day on Social Media-Encourage Key Stakeholder and others

Day Before Your Event

- Confirm Bus/Transport Options
- Check folders, T-Shirts, Banners, Swag-have a plan for how it's getting to your event
- Send out Reminder Email with important information-provide a cell # for people to connect with you.
- Send out a press release regarding your advocacy day
- If you want coverage at the event, send out an alert a couple of days before. If you want only written coverage without pictures or footage, you can send it out the day of the event. The press release should mention the issues that members will be lobbying on that day.

On the Day

- Last Minute Advocacy Day Training on the Bus (Albany)
- Make sure that volunteers and staff are positioned to assist members with directions.
- TAKE PICTURES: post on social media using hashtags, @electedofficial, head shots and room numbers. Again check that those you are taking pictures of are comfortable with distribution.
- Arrive at Rally/Press Briefing Area early to ensure staging for the group and everything is ready for your rally.
- Collection plan for feedback forms after the event to ensure that you get as many forms back from participants as soon as possible.
- Have a contact location and number with a person always on duty to help anyone with directions or questions.
- Debrief on Bus Ride Home

After the Day

- Email a thank you to advocates with highlights of the day and next steps.
 - Follow up with Electeds' Offices w/info they may have requested and thank you.
 - Post social media messages regarding success of the day, photos of electeds, shout outs.
 - Review Evaluation forms from advocates
-

EARNED MEDIA & MEDIA TO AMPLIFY

Earned/Traditional Media

One of the best ways to get your message across is through opinion-editorials, called op-eds, as well as letters to the editor and appearances on radio and TV. You want to tailor your approach to the audience of that particular publication or outlet. Overall, one of the best ways to get your message to audiences is to tie your action to a breaking news event. For e.g. when tropical storm Isais hit it meant there was an appetite for information about disasters. Anniversaries of big events such as Hurricane Katrina can also be very valuable in attracting media attention. These events can range from anniversaries of U.S. Supreme Court decisions to a holiday with a connection to your issue.



Opinion-Editorials: Published pieces are ideally 600-800 words. You want to tell a narrative that would be of interest to the reader, combined with a call to action. Op-eds allow you to get your message out to audiences directly and clearly -- but the market for op-eds can be crowded. Newspaper editors can often reject submissions. However, op-eds are a powerful way to motivate your audience to action. See our op-eds [tips sheet here](#). It is easier to convince a newspaper to publish an op-ed if you, or the entity you represent, have a direct relationship with the newspaper editor, but this is not necessary. You can also cold submit (see NY times [example](#)). If you want to solicit potential stories for use to draft an opinion-editorial you can use a google form and ask them the questions that someone can then finesse into a piece.

Letter to the Editor: A letter to the editor is in response to a piece published by that particular publication. They tend to be 200 words or less, either agreeing or disagreeing with the originally published piece. This is why it is critically important to create a [Google alert](#) that can allow for comment where you authentically connect it back to your own campaign. See Washington Post [example](#).

Radio/TV: This is one of the best ways to reach a wide audience. While you mostly control the narrative with opinion-editorials and letters to the editor (they may be edited) with TV and radio you do not. This is an interview. While you will have conversations ahead of time with the relevant producer, the interviewer may ask unanticipated questions. You want to redirect them back to the conversation you wish to have. You can acknowledge their question and then say something to the effect of “but the thing that I think is important to remember is ...” so that you can redirect the interview back to your own message. .

If something is happening in your state with ties to the campaign and you wish to pursue media please reach out to Michael@jlusa.org to assist.

Media to Amplify

When news stories, interviews and panels are published about your action, use it to connect the #JustUs campaign to your contacts and social media followers. The list below are some highlights of media generated by this campaign already. Please feel free to uplift and amplify.

<https://bit.ly/PressReleaseLaunch>

<https://msmagazine.com/2020/06/23/justus-campaign-demands-emergency-plans-for-prisons-during-covid-19/>

https://www.colorlines.com/articles/advocates-launch-campaign-demanding-protection-incarcerated-during-emergencies?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=social

<https://www.newsweek.com/decarcerate-america-now-opinion-1518067>

<https://www.mic.com/p/were-out-here-formerly-incarcerated-activists-are-bringing-their-voices-to-the-dnc-31614121>

DIGITAL ORGANIZING

How to Build Power Online

During the COVID pandemic, we have all made a shift from in-person organizing to digital platforms.

Our goals in digital organizing are threefold; building, engaging and activating communities.

This method of communication has the ability to amplify our organizing beyond local networks and have a broader statewide or national reach, so where do we start?



Step 1: Name Your Goal & Stay Consistent

- For the #JustUS campaign, we are looking to put into law emergency management plans for people who are currently incarcerated. When posting social media make sure this goal is always understood by your followers.
- Tell this in a compelling way. Many respond to pre-existing examples like Hurricane Katrina that illustrate the importance of these policy recommendations. Others respond to the fact that almost every institution has emergency planning except the Department of Corrections. However, most states require the exploitative labor of incarcerated people as part of their own emergency planning. E.g. in California incarcerated individuals are paid \$1 per hour to fight wildfires.
- Asks should be clear, research should come from reliable sources, and messaging should match [talking points](#).

Step 2: How Will You Leverage Media?

- If we live stream a rally, how can we use that at a later time? Can we send that to elected officials? Send to our ListServes?

Step 3: Who Are Your People?

- You know better than anyone the people who will engage with your online presence. What platforms are they using? What language/graphics/art can you use that will grab their attention?

Let's Talk Platforms & Ways to Use for Best Impact:



Facebook currently has the largest number of users of all social media platforms. Chances are, your audience has a FB page. Using this site allows you to post events, go live, create a FB group, and send direct messages. Leveraging FB groups you are already involved in is a quick way to get support for the #JustUs campaign. Also, there is no character limit on your posts.



Instagram is a great platform for visual content. Engagement on this platform works a bit differently, however it can still be a powerful tool. Use the campaign hashtag in your post. People who can search the hashtag will see it. Use the photos to capture excitement around #JustUs. If your advocates are on Instagram, tag them! Use your stories to tell followers about events, updates and mini-wins.



Twitter is a great place to shape your online narrative. This platform allows users to post up to 280 characters for each post. A thread(s) can continue your conversation from your initial post. Twitter is a great place to get the attention of news media. Follow strategically those who would be interested in your campaign. Use @handles to send messages directly to elected officials and their followers. Tweet storms and Twitter Chats to build engagement and awareness. Hashtags are important here as well. The more you tweet the better and include a catchy photo or graphic. Live tweeting during actions will draw interest from your followers.



Tik Tok is a space to upload short form media clips and is popular with younger folks. The platform enables people to connect a personalized political message to a broader political moment. Do not discount the use of this platform in engaging advocates who may otherwise go untapped.

Important Notes on Social Media:

- Post consistent messages about the #JustUS campaign from the [Social Media Toolkit](#).
- Send direct messages on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram or TikTok to those who are doing similar work and ask them to amplify your message.
- Retweet/Share another organizations work that is similar and connect their issue to #JustUS.
- Think through interesting ways to energize the base. For example, you may request that participants take a selfie with a piece of paper describing a disaster that occurred and when and where they were with corresponding text about the lack of protection for people inside.
- Algorithms/engagement
 - More engagement usually means your post will show up higher on your followers' feeds

- Engagement= likes, comments, clicks, etc.
- Directly encourage sharing, commenting
 - Ask questions, encourage sharing to increase awareness of your issue
 - Bump up posts by posting them to your story
- Hashtags #
 - Used to find things on specific topics, events, etc.
 - Can help garner engagement and reach target audiences
 - Can be used as campaign slogans/name
 - ex) #JustUS
- Live videos (protests, panel discussions, speeches by leaders, writers, activists, etc.)-opportunity for different type of engagement



Actions via Digital Platforms

Direct Actions, prior to COVID felt like the norm, however, we now live in a time where carrying out actions digitally is an opportunity to increase engagement, keep people safe and create a collateral that will live on for more than one moment in time. Choosing what platform, who your target audience is and your intended impact will vary, but here are some things to help in making those decisions:

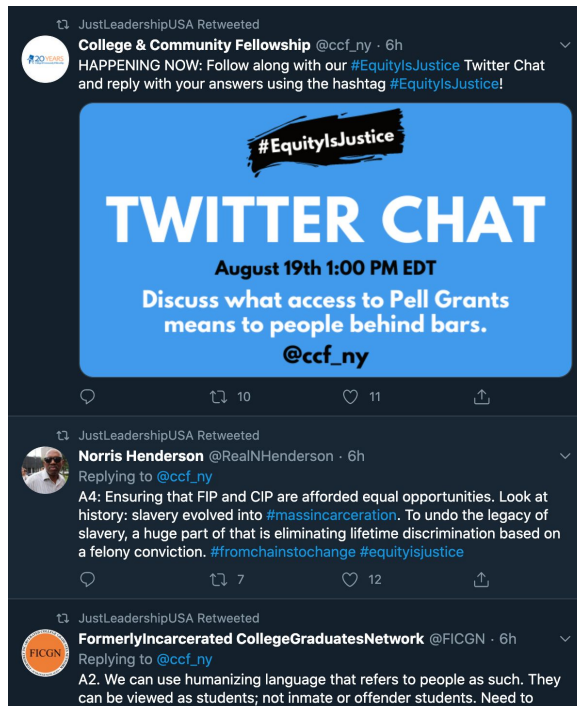
- Call to Action Platforms: Platforms orgs can use to direct folks to take action online
 - Sign a letter, send a pre-written email, sign a petition
 - [JLUSA's #JustUS platform](#)
- Fully digital/phone-based advocacy day: Legislators are now accepting meetings through calls as everyone is working from home.
 - You can schedule a two-day advocacy day but from the comfort of one's home.
 - The same rules apply as with a regular [advocacy day](#) however, everyone is participating from the comfort of their home. There should be a designated "team leader" in each of the meetings.

- To get people energized you can host a rally on a platform like zoom where you have a run of show, potentially invite press, engage in chants and demonstrate support for the issue.
- Town Halls/Panel Discussion: Opportunity for real time conversation on your campaign, with the ability to share out recording after the event.
 - Choosing a platform based on your audience and goals
 - Instagram Live, Zoom, Twitch, Youtube live, Facebook live
 - ex) IG live might be better for mobilizing a younger audience, but not for including multiple people in your live event , Zoom might be better for having a panel discussion, etc.
 - Have a plan
 - Assign clear roles-who will deal with tech issues, moderator, monitoring the chat, timing, etc.
 - Have an agenda/run of show including timing and lines on what to say labeled with speakers if possible
 - Prep speakers!
- Phone-banking: While not technically “digital” this may feel more comfortable to a group that is not as tech-savvy. You provide the numbers of elected official’s offices (publicly available on their website)
 - Assign people to call groups of individuals.
 - Provide them with a script.
 - If you set a target time window you can do what is known as a call-zap. This is intended to flood an office with so many calls they are forced to acknowledge your issue.
 - You can promote the results of the call-zap on your social media.
 -
- Coordinated Social Media Direct Actions (more specific directions included in the [social media toolkit](#)):
 - Thunder Clap/Twitter Storm (Twitter) packs a punch because they have a specific time of occurring and are orchestrated by you. Hundreds of thousands of tweets and shares happening all at once can help your message trend on Twitter. But the difference between a random person sharing your content and a huge wave of advocates tweeting with the same message gets you trending on Twitter or makes the media take note its all about timing. Using the social media toolkit will help in curating your expectations of posts and graphics. *Between 8am-5pm are typically when most engagement happens-try and stay away from weekends.*



- Twitter Chat (or Tweet chats) are public conversations organized around a specific topic on Twitter. These moderated discussions take place at a predetermined time, with a predetermined hashtag. They're a great way to build community around your campaign. You will need to add to your social media toolkit a space where you discuss how to carry out the chat with predetermined questions.

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Social Media Toolkit

Social Media Toolkits offer a coordinated effort that works toward a specific goal using social media communications. When you create a toolkit it will be specific to your campaign goals and also provide a central place for those working with you to share out your message with ease and consistency. Below are some reasons social media toolkits are helpful:

- A set of information and tools for amplifying your message - rather than mainstream media outlets spreading the word, your audience can use their own social media to spread the word.
- Includes campaign/org goals, target audience, sample posts, logos, hashtags, graphics, [videos](#) etc.
- Creating and sticking to a brand
 - Staying on brand so that your posts are recognizable by viewers
 - Sticking to a few colors, fonts, and hashtags that represent your organization or campaign
 - Include your logo on your posts - when people share your posts, their audience will know where to go for more information.
- Seize and leverage the moment to build momentum-dates, anniversaries
- Making action/participation as easy as possible
- People will be more likely to interact with, share, and participate in your campaign if:
 - You give clear and concise instructions on action items:
 - Who to contact, how to contact them, and what to say
 - Which petitions to sign
 - Ask audience to share campaign posts with specific hashtag(s)
 - You stay organized!
 - Making a centralized internet place for petitions, updates, etc.
 - Keeping a consistent message and brand that makes your campaign a reliable source



#JustUS Social Media Toolkit: You can view an example of the #JustUs Social Media Toolkit here: <https://bit.ly/JJLUSAToolkit>. On Google Docs, you have the ability to make a copy of this toolkit and then edit the toolkit with your own state specific campaign.

ONE PAGERS

One pagers are a great leave behind for your meetings with elected officials and also provide easy talking points for you advocates. Anytime you are meeting with an elected official bring this document as a leave behind for them to review in consideration of your ask.

These documents lay out concisely:

- policy recommendations
- research to support

- calls to action
- Contact details for more information.

[Here is an example of a New York specific one pager.](#) If you would like adapted for your state and need support, please reach out to us.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

COVID has demonstrated the Government's negligence when it comes to our people. We are seen and treated as less than human. Many seek to promulgate incremental change in the criminal justice space and time and time again they have ignored the expertise of the formerly incarcerated. We have asked for a seat at the table and been met with silence. We no longer want a seat. We are building our own table.

This is the launch of Leadership in Action. We're out here, we're advocating, we're fighting for our communities and we're putting all the puzzle pieces together. We're actually making sure that the people behind that wall don't think nobody out here is hearing their cry.