

TRAINING MANUAL : Q4 2021

HOW TO TALK TO A REPORTER OR ELECTED OFFICIAL

**CLIMATE ACTION IN THE
BUILD BACK BETTER ACT**



**BUSINESSFORWARD
FOUNDATION**

INTRODUCTION

Business Forward has helped more than 250,000 business leaders brief policymakers and work with local media, publish op-eds, testify at public hearings, lobby members of Congress and the White House, and advocate online.

They have appeared on *CNN*, *MSNBC*, *CNBC*, *FOX News*, and hundreds of local broadcast and radio stations. They've been featured in national outlets, like the *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and hundreds of local papers.

We've also helped business leaders submit testimony to state legislatures, EPA, DHS, House Ways and Means, Senate Finance, and the White House.

We're here to help you make the most of your time fighting for the issues that you care about. This manual is intended to help you get started.

The New York Times



CHICAGO
SUN-TIMES

Bloomberg
Businessweek

MILWAUKEE · WISCONSIN
JOURNAL SENTINEL



THE PLAIN DEALER
CLEVELAND.COM

The
Washington
Post

MSNBC

PUGET SOUND
BUSINESS JOURNAL

THE SACRAMENTO BEE

THE
HILL



Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.
WSJ

The Detroit News

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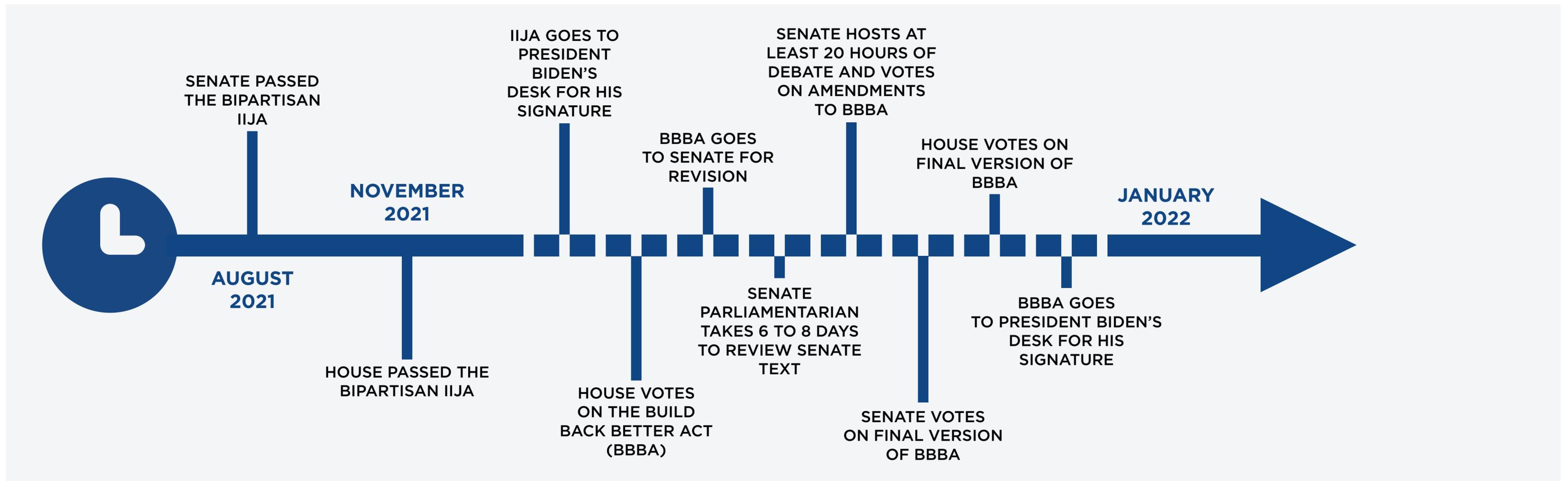
POLITICAL CONTEXT

THE BUDGET RECONCILIATION PROCESS

Congress is currently negotiating a bill called the *Build Back Better Act* (BBBA), which Democrats plan to pass through a process called **budget reconciliation**. The process allows the majority party in the Senate to pass a bill with only 50 votes — which makes a simple majority with the Vice President’s vote — compared to the usual 60 votes that a party needs to overcome an opposing filibuster.

In addition to the BBBA, Congress also recently passed the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* (IIJA), which required 60 votes to pass the Senate and received 69. Democratic leaders expect to have both bills signed into law before the end of the year.

TIMELINE FOR MOVING FORWARD WITH BOTH THE BBBA AND IIJA



POLICY BACKGROUND: KEY CLIMATE PROVISIONS

The *Build Back Better Act* will invest in a wide range of issues — including education, job creation, health care, and family leave — but its primary focus will be to **accelerate the transition to a clean economy and restore the U.S. as a global leader on energy**. Of the total \$1.75 trillion in spending, **\$555 billion will go toward investments in climate and clean energy**.

CLEAN ENERGY TAX CREDITS (\$320B)

- Ten-year expanded tax credits for utility-scale and residential clean energy, clean passenger and commercial vehicles, and manufacturing of critical components
- Tax incentives for emerging technologies, including transmission, storage, clean fuels, and direct air capture

RESILIENCE, JOBS, & LEGACY POLLUTION (\$105B)

- Grants for workforce development and creation of a Civilian Climate Corps
- Wildfire prevention, coastal resiliency, and green agriculture
- Clean our air, water, orphaned wells, and abandoned mines

CLEAN TECHNOLOGIES, PROCUREMENT, MANUFACTURING, & SUPPLY CHAINS (\$130B)

- Clean energy accelerator fund which delivers 40% of benefits to underserved communities
- Replace public transit with zero emission vehicles
- Rebates for efficient electric appliances and grants for energy efficiency building upgrades
- Forgive federal debt owed by rural electric cooperatives for stranded coal assets
- Electric vehicle charging infrastructure and high-speed rail
- Government procurement of next gen technologies

REVENUE-RAISING MEASURES (UP TO \$2 TRILLION)

- Close the \$600 billion annual tax gap by removing opportunities for noncompliance (learn more in the Business Forward report: *Closing America's Tax Gap*)
- Create a fairer tax code:
 - (a) 15% corporate minimum tax on large corporations
 - (b) 1% surcharge on corporate stock buybacks
 - (c) Global minimum tax and penalty for foreign corporations based in non-compliant countries
 - (d) Surtax on multi-millionaires and billionaires
 - (c) Avoid tax increases for small businesses and anybody making less than \$400,000 per year

KEY STATISTICS

THE BUILD BACK BETTER FRAMEWORK INCLUDES PROPOSALS THAT REDUCE EMISSIONS, CREATE JOBS, AND CUT COSTS FOR SMALL BUSINESSES AND AMERICAN FAMILIES

President Biden's *Build Back Better Act* — along with the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and planned actions from the EPA — will set the U.S. on track to meet its target of 50-52% reduction in emissions below 2005 levels in 2030.

Through tax credits, rebates, and additional investments, the *Build Back Better Act* will reduce energy costs by \$500 per year for the average American family. It will lower the price of an American-made EV by \$12,500 and cut the cost of installing rooftop solar by 30%.

The *Build Back Better Act* will promote equity by delivering 40% of its benefits to underserved communities. The package will create hundreds of thousands of high-quality jobs, including through the Civilian Climate Corps, which will employ a diverse group of 300,000 Americans.

Investments in climate-smart agriculture will go toward our farming communities struggling with climate change and severe weather. The *Build Back Better Act* would provide support for up to 130 million acres of cropland, which translates to 240,000 farms.

STATE-BY-STATE
FACT SHEETS

CLICK TO
DOWNLOAD



AND LEARN HOW THE
BUILD BACK BETTER
FRAMEWORK IMPACTS
YOUR STATE

KEY CONCEPTS

At our briefings, small business leaders tend to make one or more of six critical points.

THE SWITCH TO CLEAN ENERGY COULD SAVE OUR ECONOMY.

Those who argue that switching to clean energy will “wreck the economy” ignore how little most businesses spend on electricity compared to how much they spend on supply chains. As supply chains grow more global, more specialized, and faster, severe weather events grow more expensive.

THE GLOBAL ENERGY RACE IS OVER: RENEWABLES WON — AND IT’S NOT CLOSE.

Virtuous cycles in clean power are driving market prices down. Renewables are predicted to produce two-thirds of the world’s power by 2050. By protecting coal plants and propping up oil and gas, the U.S. is fighting market forces that cannot be reversed. We should be leading on energy, not falling behind.

AS RENEWABLES BECOME COMPETITIVE, MORE STATES CAN PROFIT BY “BUYING LOCAL.”

Decentralized sources of clean energy mean that states which would otherwise import fossil fuels can keep those dollars in their own economy. For example, if Arizona switched from consuming imported fossil fuels to its own clean energy, the state could bring \$16 billion per year home.

CLEAN ENERGY MEANS GOOD JOBS AND INVESTMENT DOLLARS, WHERE WE NEED THEM.

The shift to wind and solar can redistribute energy jobs which have long been centralized in states with oil, gas, and coal reserves. Investing in renewables brings reliable revenue streams and job growth to rural and farming communities that are struggling with declining populations and volatile crop yields.

SMALL BUSINESSES ARE LESS LIKELY TO SURVIVE SEVERE WEATHER EVENTS.

For retailers, restaurants, and the entertainment industry, weather can make or break their year because marginal sales are critical to survival. Small businesses are less likely to survive extreme weather events. They have smaller cash reserves, are more likely to operate out of a single location, and have a harder time relocating.

THE U.S. CANNOT COMPETE WITHOUT AN ACCELERATED CLEAN ENERGY TRANSITION.

Global competitors are leading the energy market. Meanwhile, climate change is undermining competitive advantages at home: Water quality in Michigan’s Great Lakes is declining, heat and drought are stressing crop yields out West, and floods are damaging essential infrastructure in Ohio.

8 RULES TO FOLLOW

1: MAKE THE BUSINESS CASE

You have a business to run, so you want the time you volunteer to be meaningful and efficient. Focus on what you can best contribute: **the business case.**

1. THE QUESTIONS UNDECIDED AMERICANS ARE ASKING TEND TO RELATE TO JOBS, TAXES, ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY, AND GOVERNMENT WASTE.

They want to know how a particular bill or issue will affect their industry, their town and state, and their employer. And they trust business leaders more than politicians.

“

I own a solar installation company in Arizona. Our whole industry experienced record growth in 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic slowed us down.

Solar already supports more than 7,000 jobs in Arizona. Now is not the time to scale back our clean energy incentives — it's time to strengthen them.

”

2. A DATA-DRIVEN, RESULTS-ORIENTED APPROACH, FOCUSED ON REAL-WORLD EXPERIENCE, HELPS DEPOLITICIZE CONTENTIOUS ISSUES.

Undecided voters appreciate an evidence-based approach, and business leaders can connect their experiences with proposed public policy decisions.

“

I work for an auto plant in Michigan and severe weather events keep disrupting our supply chain, which can cost us more than \$1 million in just an hour of down time. We can't afford to keep waiting — we need to act on climate now.

”

2: UNDERSTAND YOUR MISSION

Business leaders generally contribute to the debate in one of three ways. **Before you speak out, be sure to understand which role you're playing.**

1. RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT A PROBLEM.

For example, to push for federal investment in nascent technologies, a business leader can demonstrate that market barriers are real; the solutions make sense; and inaction is expensive.

“ The small businesses in my community get hit hard by blackouts. Reliable, long-duration storage would make a big difference, but few energy providers in the region can afford the risk of entering the long-duration storage market this early.

The Federal Government can — and it should lead the way so the storage market can grow. ”

2. PUSHING SPECIFIC PROVISIONS OR CONCEPTS DURING A LEGISLATIVE PROCESS OR BUDGET NEGOTIATION.

For example, a business leader can use negotiations over the corporate tax rate to make the case for supporting the IRS in closing the \$600 billion annual tax gap.

“ If we want to avoid raising the corporate tax rate and at the same time spend more on energy and infrastructure, we need to focus on closing the tax gap. This isn't about working families: 99% of them pay their taxes in full. It's about getting America's largest businesses and wealthiest families to pay what they already owe.

”

3. HELPING CLOSE A DEAL, SUPPORTING A TOUGH VOTE.

Today, it's too easy for special interests to derail needed reforms. Even allies can block a “good” deal because it's not “perfect.” A business leader can explain that despite losing certain provisions, the *Build Back Better Act* is still far better than no climate bill at all.

“ You may be right that this bill isn't as strong as the original \$3.5 trillion package, but the updated framework is still still our nation's largest ever clean energy bill and it will bring the U.S. back to the table.

If this deal fails, we could fall further behind on climate for decades to come.

”

3: HAVE A CLEAR OPINION

“On the one hand... but, on the other hand...” won’t help a member of Congress decide how to vote, and newspapers are unlikely to publish an op-ed that fails to pick a side. **If you’re going to speak out, be clear.** Raise an alarm. Provide cover on a tough vote. Avoid equivocation.

JON HURDLE

CLIMATE CHECK: US INVESTORS ‘LACK DATA ON CLIMATE RISK’

mni

...Smith Insurance Agency in Helena, Ark. has been writing fewer home-owner policies in recent years because premiums and deductibles have soared, while policyholders have avoided making claims for fear of not getting their policies renewed by risk-averse underwriters, said owner Kevin Smith.

An owner of a typical 3,000-square-foot house in Smith’s market is now paying \$4,000 a year to insure the property, more than twice the rate of five years ago, while the deductible for such a property has surged to \$2,000 from \$500 over the same period.

Over the last two years, premiums have risen about 20%, he said, and that’s straining homeowners’ ability to maintain coverage or forcing the mot choose between insurance and other purchases.

“People are getting to the point where they can’t afford homeowners’ insurance any more,” he said. “There’s a huge cost to our customers and to our economy because it means they will have less to spend on other things.”...

To slow greenhouse gas emissions, he urged governments to impose a carbon tax, which would fall most heavily on the biggest producers - the power-generation industry - forcing it to pay a tax that is already effectively levied on all those who feel the effects of climate change.

← MAKES THE COST RELATEABLE BY STARTING WITH IMPACT ON A SINGLE CUSTOMER.

← PIVOTS FROM SINGLE EXAMPLE TO INDUSTRY.

← EXPANDS FROM INDUSTRY TO ECONOMY AS A WHOLE.

← DESCRIBES PROBLEM AS MARKET FAILURE AND PROPOSES MARKET-DRIVEN SOLUTION.

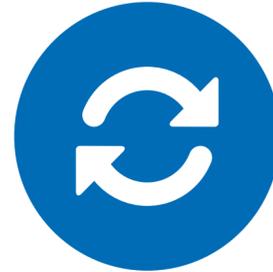
4: KEEP IT SHORT, KEEP IT SIMPLE (AND PRACTICE)

Talking live to a radio reporter? You'll get two questions and about 20 seconds. Taping a TV interview in your office? The station will use about 30 seconds of your 15-minute interview. Meeting with your senator? You'll get about five minutes.



REPORTERS CAN'T QUOTE YOU IF YOUR ANSWERS ARE TOO LONG.

Elected officials, who meet with dozens of constituents every day, won't remember your key points if they're buried.



TO BE SUCCESSFUL, MAKE YOUR POINT QUICKLY, AND MAKE IT REPEATEDLY.

Extend your idea with examples. Ideally, start each interview with three points in mind; practice each point before you speak with the reporter or official; and practice referring back to your points in different ways.



USING LOCAL EXAMPLES AND SIMPLE COMPARISONS CAN HELP YOU MAKE YOUR POINT MORE QUICKLY.

For example, when advocating for federal background checks on all gun sales, a business leader can compare how the strength of gun laws across states affects communities. In general, states with stronger gun laws have fewer gun deaths as well as lower costs to taxpayers. Massachusetts has the 7th strongest gun laws, lowest gun death rank, and an average annual cost of \$261 per taxpayer due to gun violence. Missouri, on the other hand, has the 5th weakest gun laws, 7th highest gun death rank, and an average annual cost of \$1,606 to taxpayers.

5: SPEAK FOR YOUR EMPLOYEES, CUSTOMERS, SUPPLIERS AND COMPETITORS

You're most effective when you cite your employees, customers, suppliers, or competitors as evidence. For example, an accountant with 50 clients has credibility on simplifying the tax code, while an accountant with 50 employees has credibility explaining the kinds of health care options they value.

Most business leaders share the name of their company when they talk with reporters, publish an op-ed, or speak out in some other way. These executives are building their company's brand:

“ At ABC Insurance, we've seen rates for beach property rise by 50% over the past four years because of climate change risk. Clients are cancelling their policies, leaving themselves open to big losses. ”

Alternatively, you can also speak generally, without naming your company, as an expert in the industry:

“ I've sold insurance for beach houses here in New Jersey for 30 years, and climate change is driving rates up by 50%. Clients are cancelling their policies, leaving themselves open to big losses. ”

Business abroad is going to happen anyway, the question is whether or not international business practices will be fair. **If the United States doesn't set the rules, someone else will.**

- Brenda Hall, 360 Bridge

AUSTIN
BUSINESS JOURNAL

Every product we sell overseas **helps us hire more Washington-state workers** and pay them competitive wages.

- Anil Amlani, Sonosite

PUGET SOUND
BUSINESS JOURNAL

If passage of this authority stalls, our trading partners might be inclined to negotiate their own agreements, with **the United States left on the sidelines.**

- Det Ansinn, BrickSimple

The Philadelphia Inquirer

The future of small businesses like mine goes hand in hand with the future of the U.S. trade agenda.

- Wendy Mascio, Medical Equipment

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

I've seen how **exporting can powerfully transform a company**, and I want to see it do the same for others.

- Kyle Weatherly, Solaris

MILWAUKEE · WISCONSIN
JOURNAL SENTINEL

Discouraging businesses from expanding to other countries is like standing in a shopkeeper's doorway and turning away **95 percent of customers.**

- Craig Shields, Graymills

CHICAGO
SUN*TIMES

SMALL BUSINESS LEADERS ARGUE FOR NEW TRADE AGREEMENTS

6: REFRAME QUESTIONS ABOUT “HOT BUTTON” ISSUES

The whole point of having business leaders speak out is to get beyond the partisan or hot button issues that dominate most press coverage. Your job is to focus on what a particular proposal or problem means for business, jobs, and economic growth. That’s your area of expertise. If a reporter does ask you an off-topic question, **pivot back to your key points.**

EXAMPLE - POLITICAL FEASIBILITY

A business leader can support the Build Back Better package by explaining what it would mean for the communities they live and work in. But a reporter may respond to your point by asking about the political feasibility of a specific reform or the opinions of particular Senators.

“ I can’t speak to the political process, or where certain elected officials are on that particular provision, but I do know that our small business community in Madison backs the Build Back Better Agenda, and officials across the aisle have worked long and hard to craft this framework. ”

EXAMPLE - PAYFORS

A business leader can support investments in tax enforcement by explaining how wealthy households and large corporations are avoiding taxes they already owe. But a reporter could ask if increasing tax collection will hurt the economy.

“ Closing the tax gap is not about increasing taxes. America’s wealthiest households and largest corporations avoid \$600 billion in taxes each year because they get to “self-report” their income streams.

By helping the IRS collect these avoided tax payments, we can pay for climate action without raising taxes on small businesses or the middle class. ”

EXAMPLE - SPECIFIC INCENTIVES

A business leader can support clean energy incentives by explaining why wind and solar prices keep dropping – and how they can help create jobs in states that have traditionally relied on imported coal, oil, and gas. A reporter may ask why the government should subsidize wind and solar over coal.

“ Taxpayers subsidize every energy sector. In fact, we’ve spent \$120 billion subsidizing coal since WWII. I can’t speak to the value of all the money we’ve spent on coal, but I do know that wind and solar are now much more competitive, and they present my state’s first real chance to build an energy economy. ”

7: ACT LIKE YOU'RE ON-THE-RECORD, EVEN WHEN YOU'RE NOT

The rules for “on” and “off” the record can vary from reporter to reporter. As a general rule, **we recommend you operate on-the-record – and pick your words accordingly.**



ON-THE-RECORD:

The reporter can quote you directly (by name).



OFF-THE-RECORD:

Off-the-record can mean different things. It usually means the reporter can only use information if a second source verifies or shares it. Sometimes, it relates to how you are cited. For example, a reporter may refer to you indirectly (for example, as “a partner at a Cleveland VC firm”), or she may use your information without citing you at all. Some reporters consider this method of citing individuals “on background.” On background can also mean you are willing to share research or other information with a reporter but do not want to be featured in the story.



Because reporters apply these rules differently, you need to set the terms of the conversation before the interview begins. If you do not specify “off,” you are “on.” If you specify “off,” and the reporter says nothing, you are still “on.” If you do not want to be quoted, establish the terms under which the reporter may use the information and how it will be attributed.

REMEMBER: YOU CAN'T TAKE SOMETHING OFF THE RECORD AFTER THE FACT.

8: PICK YOUR BATTLES – AND LET BUSINESS FORWARD HELP

A single business leader, acting alone, is unlikely to have an impact. But hundreds or thousands of business leaders, making similar arguments at the same time, are hard to ignore.

It also helps to deliver your op-ed, interview, or post when your particular issue is in play. For example, we had a handful of opportunities to fix our immigration laws over the last few years. Each opportunity was driven by the budget process, or some other legislative priority. Each time, immigration advocates and Business Forward worked together to deliver business support for a reasonable compromise that would protect immigrants and respect the rule of law.

We encourage you to share your work with us, and we promise to limit our “digital actions,” surveys, and “a reporter just called” requests to moments when you can really make a difference. We won’t waste your time.

With your permission, we can also include your comments in testimony we present to Congressional committees and federal agencies.



FOR WOMEN'S HEALTH WEEK, BUSINESS LEADERS FIGHT BACK

This week is Women's Health Week, and **more than 1,700 entrepreneurs, executives, and small business owners** have signed on to a letter form Business Forward, affirming their belief that access to health care is essential to women's professional and personal success.

MAY 17, 2019

BUSINESS FORWARD

TESTIMONY ON BEHALF OF 1,000+ SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS CONCERNED ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE

APRIL 25, 2017

BUSINESS FORWARD

BUSINESS LEADERS TO POLITICIANS: “RESPECT THE RULE OF LAW”

New report shows business leaders' concerns over attacks on the judiciary... **475 business leaders submitted personal statements** about America's courts.

MARCH 7, 2019



IN THEIR OWN WORDS: 10 BUSINESS LEADERS EXPLAIN WHY THEY ARE CALLING FOR MAJOR CHANGES AT AMERICA'S SCHOOLS.

JULY 24, 2018

BEST PRACTICES

**FOR OP-EDS, LETTERS TO THE EDITOR,
AND BRIEFING ELECTED OFFICIALS**

OP-EDS AND LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

OP-EDS

Op-eds make an argument about a pressing issue, usually featuring an unusual and compelling voice from the community. Most newspapers limit op-eds to 600 words.

VALUE

In deciding whether to publish your piece, editors will ask four questions. Is your issue important? Is it timely? Does it have a significant local angle? And does the author have a credible and interesting angle?

STRUCTURE

Use eight to 10 short paragraphs, about two to three sentences each. Start with an anecdote that introduces your point of view. Explain why the issue is important right now. Introduce your business, and explain how this issue affects your business. Close with a call to action.

PITCHING

Larger papers have online tools that allow you to submit your op-ed. Others invite you to email your document. Start with the largest newspaper in your market, or a leading outlet in your particular industry. Be sure to check whether it's published a similar piece recently. If so, move on to your second choice. When you submit an op-ed to one paper, you can't shop it to another until the first gives you an answer.

RESOURCES & LINKS

<https://resource-media.org/writing-slam-dunk-op-ed/>

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR (LTES)

LTEs typically respond directly to an article or op-ed the newspaper has recently published. You can also respond to a recent news event. Keep your draft to 200 words or less. We recommend you use four short paragraphs, 1-2 sentences each. Don't be surprised if the newspaper edits for space. Larger papers have online tools that allow you to submit your LTE. Others invite you to email your document.

RESOURCES & LINKS

<https://resource-media.org/letters-to-the-editor/>

TALKING TO YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

GENERAL

A small number of calls from informed constituents can have a bigger impact than you might think. Regular communication, over time, builds trust. Be sure to focus on your elected officials – the ones who represent where you live, where you work, or your employees. In Congress, Representatives of other districts are likely to ignore you out of deference to your Representative and because they cannot use their office funds to pay for communications outside their districts.

LETTERS

Use email. Regular mail to Congress is re-routed, sorted, and x-rayed. This can add weeks to delivery. Most offices have email forms accessible from the “contact” tab on the lawmaker’s official website. Include the legislation or issue in your subject line – with a “yes” or “no” to make your opinion clear (e.g., “NO on steel tariffs” or “YES on carbon pricing”). Keep your message to three paragraphs. Use a fact-based approach. Cite local examples, if you have them. Identify yourself as a constituent and business leader in your first paragraph.

CALLS

Identify yourself as a constituent or as a business leader with a presence in the district. Identify the topic/bill you want to discuss. Be clear about your position. Ask for the Legislative Assistant covering your issue. If they refer you to a Constituent Liaison, that’s okay. If you have data about the bill or your business, describe it (e.g., “These new tariffs raised the price of steel by 25%. This new cost wiped out 40% of my profit this month.”). Ask for the name and email of the staffer responsible for that issue, then send him or her a follow-up email with the data.

REQUEST A MEETING, OFFER A TOUR

This is one of the best ways to break through with a business government office. Ask for the Legislative Assistant covering your issue. Request a meeting with the official. If dealing with a Member of Congress, request a meeting back home, during in-district work periods. If appropriate, invite your elected official to visit your place of business.

RESOURCES & LINKS

FIND YOUR REPRESENTATIVES

<https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>

RESEARCH THEIR BIOS, COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

<https://www.congress.gov/members>

RESEARCH THEIR VOTING RECORD

https://www.senate.gov/legislative/HowTo/how_to_votes.htm

SEARCH FOR SPONSORED BILLS

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/browse>

ABOUT BUSINESS FORWARD FOUNDATION

The **Business Forward Foundation** is an independent research organization that takes a business-minded look at policy issues affecting America's economic competitiveness. The Foundation combines insights and advice from more than 250,000 local business leaders across the country with rigorous policy analysis to educate the general public on some of the most important issues of our time.



INFO@BUSINESSFWD.ORG

BUSINESSFWD.ORG

655 15TH STREET NW,
SUITE 580
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005

202.861.1270