

TRAINING MANUAL : Q2 2021

HOW TO TALK TO A REPORTER OR ELECTED OFFICIAL

GUN SAFETY AND
BACKGROUND CHECKS



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

HOW TO TALK ABOUT

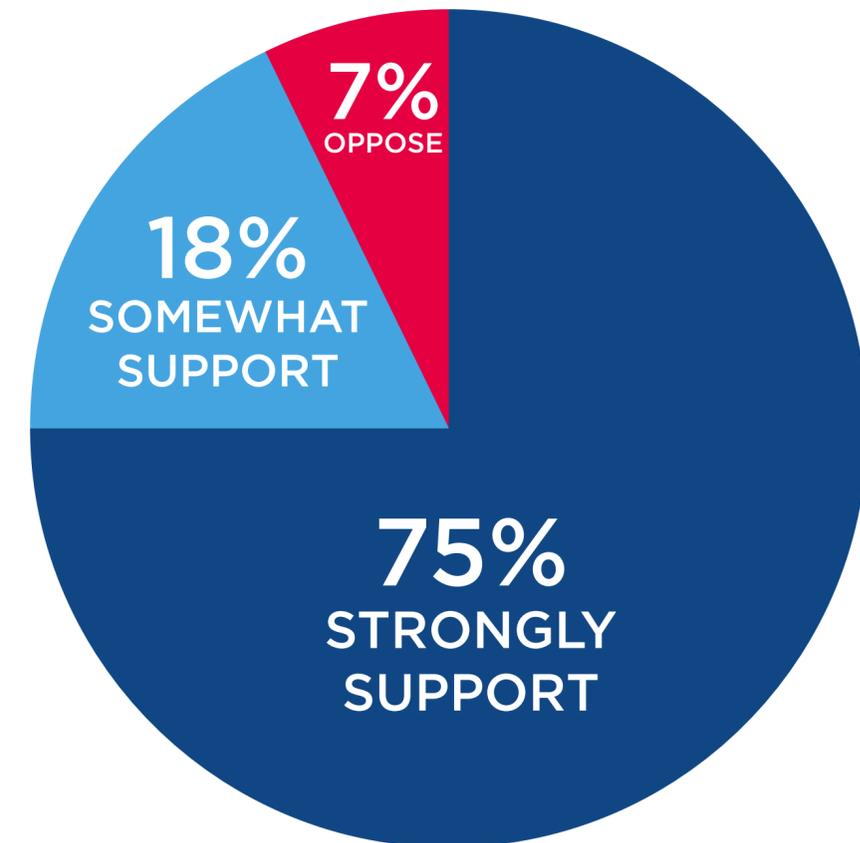
GUN SAFETY AND BACKGROUND CHECKS

KEY POINTS

We've organized hundreds of briefings around the country with reform-minded CEOs. Here are some of the most common points that business leaders make.

- 1. Entrepreneurs, executives, and small business owners care and rely on the communities in which they operate. The safety of their employees and consumers is a major concern of businesses.**
- 2. Gun violence is expensive. Businesses lose \$1.4 million every day in productivity and revenue. It costs American taxpayers and communities \$280 billion annually.**
- 3. Communities that experience gun violence are less likely to attract new business, investment, customers, and talent.**
- 4. Although business leaders may not agree on every aspect of gun safety proposals, background checks on gun sales is a common-sense and constitutional solution that would save lives.**
- 5. Background checks also enjoy bipartisan support — including the vast majorities of Republicans and gun owners.**

VOTERS' OPINIONS ON REQUIRING BACKGROUND CHECKS ON ALL GUN SALES



SOURCE: GLOBAL STRATEGY GROUP ONLINE SURVEY OF 2020 VOTERS

THE COST OF GUN VIOLENCE IS \$280 BILLION A YEAR

COSTS BORNE BY THE GOVERNMENT AND PAID FOR BY TAXPAYERS

\$2
BILLION

MEDICAL COSTS

\$10.7
BILLION

POLICE & CRIMINAL JUSTICE COSTS

OUT-OF-POCKET COSTS PAID FOR BY FAMILIES AND EMPLOYERS

\$1.7
BILLION

MEDICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH COSTS

\$528.7
MILLION

LOST PRODUCTIVITY, LOST REVENUE, COST OF RETRAINING WORKERS

\$51.2
BILLION

FORGONE EARNINGS AND WAGE EQUIVALENT FOR UNPAID CAREGIVER WORK FOR VICTIMS

INTANGIBLE LOST QUALITY-OF-LIFE COSTS

\$214.2
BILLION

AN ESTIMATE OF THE INTANGIBLE LOSS OF VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS DUE TO EITHER A LIFE CUT SHORT OR A PERSON PERMANENTLY DISABLED BY GUN VIOLENCE

THE COST OF FATAL AND NON-FATAL GUN VIOLENCE

\$270,399

THE AVERAGE COST OF EACH GUN FATALITY TO TAXPAYERS

\$52,585

THE AVERAGE COST OF EACH INSTANCE OF NONFATAL GUN INJURY TO TAXPAYERS



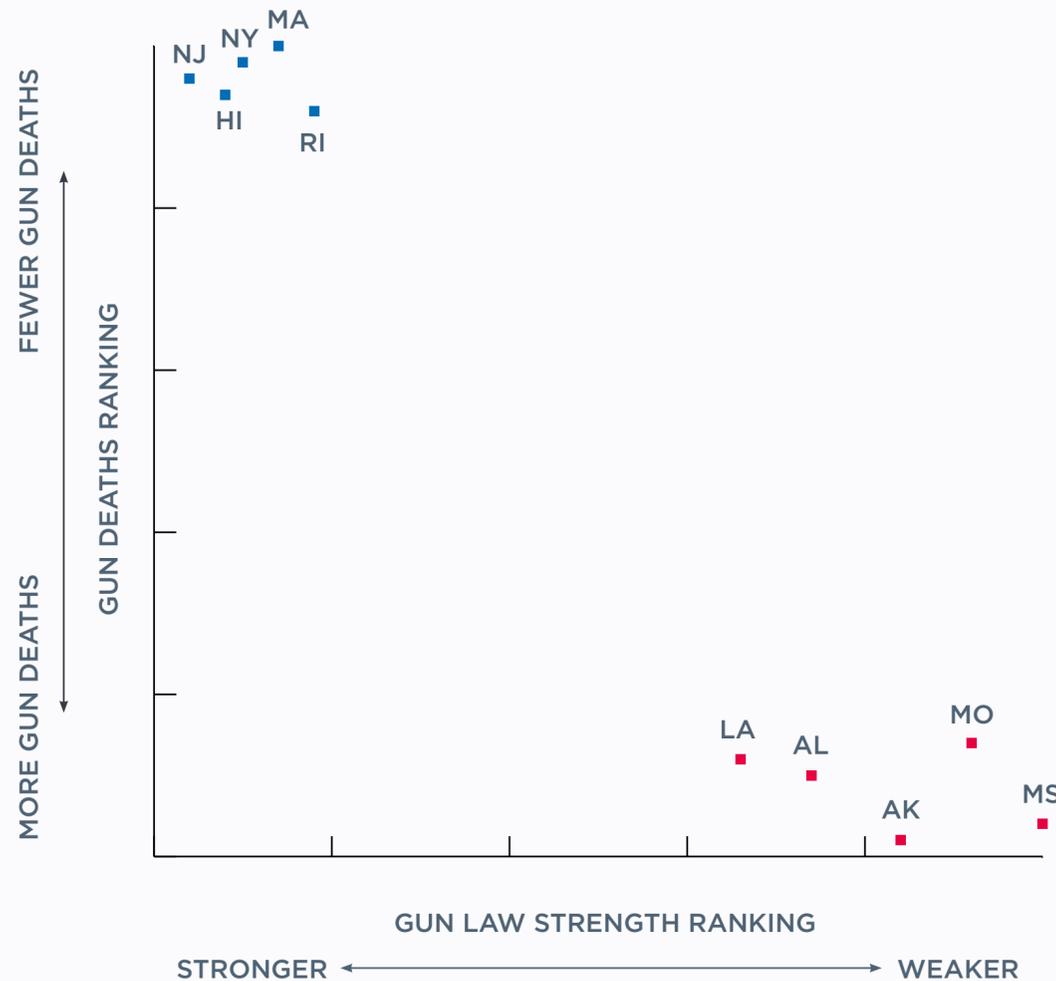
SOURCE: EVERYTOWN RESEARCH & POLICY

THE COST OF GUN VIOLENCE IS HIGHER FOR STATES WITH WEAKER GUN LAWS

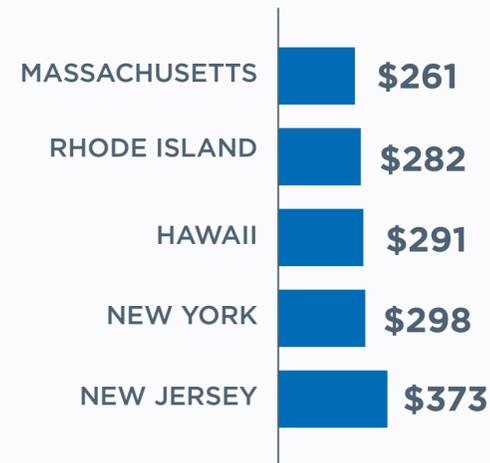
COSTS BY STATE

The average cost for overall gun violence in the U.S. is \$860 for every person per year. In states with stronger gun laws, it's less than half this amount. In states with weaker laws, it's double or more.

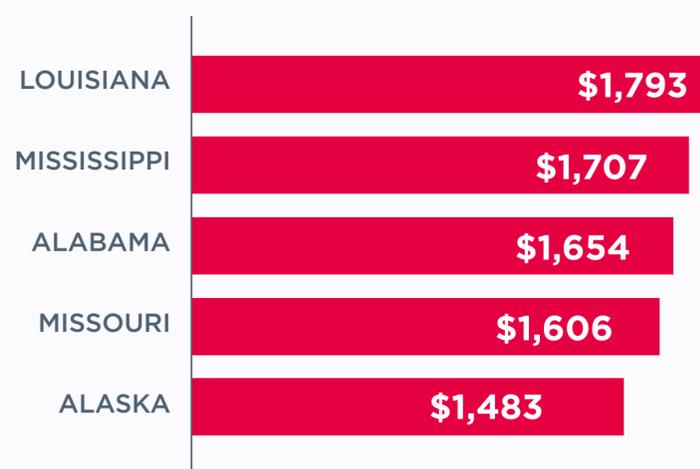
STATE RANKINGS OF GUN LAW STRENGTH VS. GUN LAW DEATHS



FIVE STATES WITH LOWEST COSTS TO TAXPAYERS (ANNUAL AVERAGE PER PERSON)



FIVE STATES WITH HIGHEST COSTS TO TAXPAYERS (ANNUAL AVERAGE PER PERSON)



SOURCE: EVERYTOWN RESEARCH & POLICY; GIFFORDS LAW CENTER

THE SOLUTION

Background checks are a common-sense, constitutional solution that can save lives; They have blocked more than 3.5 million illegal gun sales to prohibited purchasers since 1994.

Current federal law, however, covers only federally licensed firearms dealers. While most licensed gun dealers play by the rules, unlicensed dealers in states without background check laws operate outside the system, putting us all at greater risk.



HOW TO APPROACH THE ARGUMENT

GUN SAFETY IS A CONTENTIOUS ISSUE, BUT BACKGROUND CHECKS HAVE ALWAYS ENJOYED BROAD SUPPORT.

More than 90 percent of Americans across the political spectrum support legislation to expand background checks, including vast majorities of Republicans and gun owners.

BACKGROUND CHECKS HAVE BEEN AROUND FOR 27 YEARS, BUT CONGRESS LEFT A LOOPHOLE, AND UNLICENSED GUN DEALERS ARE TAKING ADVANTAGE AT THE EXPENSE OF LICENSED DEALERS.

Licensed dealers following this common-sense rule have prevented 3.5 million gun sales. But online and other unlicensed dealers ignore the rules, and their share of gun sales is growing.

THE DISTURBING SPIKE IN MASS SHOOTINGS HAS CAUSED MANY AMERICANS TO RECONSIDER THIS ISSUE: WE HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO FIX BACKGROUND CHECKS FOR GOOD.

We don't have to agree on every gun safety proposal before Congress, but this fix to our background check rules is simple, effective, and levels the playing field between licensed and unlicensed dealers.

Imagine two TSA lines at the airport.

One where people knew they would be checked...



... and one where they knew they wouldn't be.

How safe would you feel boarding the plane?

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 their employer. And they trust business leaders more than politicians.

“ I’m happy with the health insurance I get through work. What does repealing the Affordable Care Act mean for me? ”

“ I want to do something about climate change. Can we afford it? ”

2. A DATA-DRIVEN, RESULTS-ORIENTED APPROACH HELPS DEPOLITICIZE CONTENTIOUS ISSUES.

Consider these examples:

- A software executive encourages his school board to support a new charter school specializing in IT and software coding, arguing that he’ll have to hire from out of town if local schools can’t produce qualified graduates.
- Automakers and suppliers explain to climate change deniers in Congress how severe weather caused by climate change is affecting auto supply chains and assembly plants – causing plant shutdowns that cost \$1.2 million/hour.

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 education reform, a business leader can explain the long-term cost of failing to modernize her city's schools. She can demonstrate the problem is real; solutions make sense; and gridlock is expensive.

“ I need to hire 20 software engineers over the next three years. And I really want to hire local, but our local schools aren't producing enough engineers. ”

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

For example, a business leader can use negotiations over corporate tax cuts to make the case for a carbon tax that would encourage clean energy and pay for new infrastructure investment.

“ If we want to cut corporate tax rates and at the same time spend more on infrastructure and defense, we need to consider a carbon tax to provide more revenue. It will also reduce carbon emissions and help America win the clean energy race. ”

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.”

For example, a business leader can explain why “weak” environmental provisions in a trade deal are better than the alternative: no environmental protections, at all.

“ You may be right that the environmental protections in President Obama's Trans-Pacific Partnership don't go far enough. But if this deal fails, China will step in with its own deal. And China's deal won't have any environmental provisions at all. ”

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.

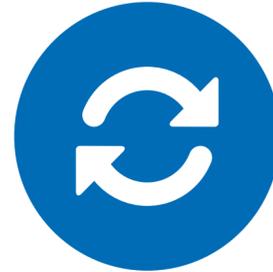
4: KEEP IT SHORT, KEEP IT SIMPLE (AND PRACTICE)

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 - VOTING REFORMS

A business leader can support voter protection laws 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, particular Senators, or even the filibuster.

SUGGESTED ANSWER:

“

I can’t speak to the political process, or where certain elected officials are on this particular bill, but I do know that voters should pick who governs them, and officials shouldn’t be able to pick who votes for them. And I think a majority of voters agrees with me.

”

EXAMPLE - CLEAN ENERGY

A business leader can support clean energy regulations 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.

SUGGESTED ANSWER:

“

Taxpayers subsidize every energy sector. In fact, we’ve spent \$1 trillion on energy subsidies since WWII, and 70 percent of that went to oil, gas, and coal. I can’t speak to the value of all the money we’ve spent on coal and oil, but I do know that wind and solar are becoming more competitive, and they present my state’s first real chance to build an energy economy.

”

EXAMPLE - TARIFFS

If you’re talking with a reporter about how new steel and aluminum tariffs are raising your prices and making it harder to export your products, he may ask you about the drama over President Trump’s behavior at a recent G7 Summit.

SUGGESTED ANSWER:

“

I can’t speak to that, but I do know that tariffs increased my steel costs by 25%, which is making it hard to export my goods to Europe and Asia. In those markets, the price they pay for steel prices has actually dropped.

”

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

**1155 CONNECTICUT AVENUE NW
SUITE 1000
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20036**

202.861.1270