

  
**Crittenton**<sup>TM</sup>

services for children and families

## Advocacy Guide

# Who We Are

## **Crittenton Services for Children and Families Policy and Communications**

### **Contacts:**

**For information about legislation, advocacy or collaborating with policy makers** in your area, contact our public policy and advocacy department:

- \* [policy@crittentonsocal.org](mailto:policy@crittentonsocal.org)
- \* (562) 989-0537 ext 346, or (714) 680-9000

**Media inquiries and all other public relations inquiries**, please contact our communications department:

- \* [communications@crittentonsocal.org](mailto:communications@crittentonsocal.org)
- \* (714) 680-9000

Founded in 1966 in Newport Beach, California, Crittenton Services for Children and Families (CSCF) has grown to service 5 Southern California counties and hundreds of families each year. Today, CSCF has three residential campuses located in Orange County working with domestic and international children, and is proud to provide wrap-around, family preservation and other community based services in addition to operating as a foster family agency. With over 500 employees and a rich history of being a leader in child welfare, Crittenton believes that to serve troubled children and their families, it requires community education, awareness and their involvement.

To join a Crittenton advocacy group, contact our policy department or visit [www.crittentonsocal.org](http://www.crittentonsocal.org) to learn more.

**Crittenton Services for  
Children and Families  
801 E. Chapman Ave., Ste. 201  
Fullerton, CA 92831  
(714) 680-9000**

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Visit [www.crittentonsocal.org](http://www.crittentonsocal.org) to become a Crittenton advocate today

# CSCF Advocacy Guide

- \* **Why Advocacy? (3)**
- \* **Relationship Building (4)**
- \* **Meetings (5)**
- \* **Correspondence (7)**
- \* **Letters to the Editor (8)**
- \* **Media (9)**
- \* **Social Media (10)**
- \* **Quick Tip Guide (11)**
- \* **Appendices (14)**



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# Grassroots Advocacy Guide

## I. Intro: Why Advocacy?

Grassroots advocacy is the path that connects the individual, organization or cause to the policy makers and leaders in government. It is an essential component of effecting change by connecting stakeholders with their communities and vice versa.

Citizen involvement is critical to our community and nation as a whole. It serves to bring about desired change, to understanding and appreciating the larger needs of a community or group, and to provide a necessary check and balance for our government. An engaged, active citizenry can make real, beneficial impacts if they have enthusiasm and the right tools to do so, and in a variety of ways.

So why should you, the citizen, advocate? A few common goals of advocacy include:

- Raising awareness
- Attracting media attention
- Recruiting & mobilizing supporters and volunteers
- Reforming policies
- Benefitting the struggle of a specific group

The following guide is designed to provide practical, modifiable tools for citizens who want to make a difference in their communities. The different options can be modified by issue, paired together or used alone.

Your elected representatives want your feedback and your unique perspective. By communicating and engaging, you can improve your community while empowering your legislator to represent you better. Crittenton Services for Children and Families, committed to the communities we serve and the families in them, invites you to join us as we work to provide our clients with the best chance of being in a healthy, stable family. Please review the many options you have for advocacy, and contact Stefanie Benvenuto, Director of Public Policy and Advocacy with any questions or suggestions you may have. Together, we will make a difference.

**"I take the feedback and comments I receive from my constituents in the 39<sup>th</sup> district very seriously and their direct engagement is an integral part of the representational process."**

***-U.S. Representative Ed. Royce  
(CA-39)***

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# Advocacy Pathways

## I. Building the Relationship

A meaningful relationship with an elected official is an invaluable thing in the world of advocacy. It requires time and patience, but can provide you and your organization with a ready ear to listen to your concerns or comments. Furthermore, lending your voice over a period of time on a specific topic can establish you as a resource to the office- increasing your impact while maintaining your issue as a priority.

To build such a relationship, take advantage of every reasonable opportunity to get to know your representative. Their websites will list events they are scheduled to attend, or regularly appear at. Often, they will host events within the community, or have office hours in the district where you can easily stop in to say hello. Like all relationships, establishing one requires more than a quick, solitary introduction. Stay updated on their legislative priorities, recent successes and work on behalf of their district, and when appropriate, don't hesitate to send a well-thought out letter or email to congratulate them or comment on recent activities to keep the conversation going.

The relationships with your elected official should not exclude his/her key district staff members. These staffers have intimate knowledge of the district and regularly advise the legislator. It is important (and fairly easy) to keep staff aware of your advocacy efforts and they will appreciate your interest in their office's work. Keep in mind that both elected officials and staff are charged with representing and responding to the needs of a large multitude of people, so be respectful and appreciative of their time.

### Quick Tips for Relationship Building:

1. **Don't forget business cards.**
2. **Keep a one-page hand out or fact sheet handy** to provide to staff or elected officials when you meet them.
3. **Do your research.** Not only will your conversation flow smoothly, but you will gain credibility by being informed and prepared.
4. **Offer yourself as a resource** on whatever issue you wish them to assist you on. If it's child welfare, education or small business, offer to lend your insider knowledge and experiences.
5. **Follow up.** Sending a quick email or a handwritten note (preferably the latter) is easy and effective.
6. **Be yourself.** Government officials and their staff appreciate a sincere constituent with a genuine desire to be involved in their community. They want to hear from you!

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## II. Meetings

Elected officials at every level of government rely on their constituents for feedback and insight to their communities. To meet with a legislator, you don't have to travel to Sacramento or Washington, D.C. Representatives in state and federal government have "district offices" (sometimes more than one in larger districts) where you may request a meeting. This provides valuable face-to-face time for you and your organization to have a substantive dialogue with a legislator. Additionally, it provides an opportunity to identify key staff in that office that may be valuable to connect with.

When requesting a meeting, ask to speak with the scheduler in that office. Typically a legislator will have one designated staff member who is responsible for their calendar. While it is smart to have a few

**"I encourage my constituents to be active in their communities and to let me know what concerns or suggestions they have. Many people don't realize that the best pieces of legislation started out as an idea that a community member had and brought to the attention of a legislator."**

***-CA Senator Bob Huff***

dates selected in advance that you would prefer, try to be open to their availability as there are always demands on their schedule. If possible work with their schedule, and offer to meet in another location if necessary (is there a local Starbucks that may be easier? An early breakfast? Mobile office hours?). Being flexible not only makes the office more amenable to working with you, but helps make the scheduling process a smooth one.

Anticipating the schedule of an elected official can make the process easier. For instance, the legislative calendar for California legislators is published at the beginning of the year, so you can point out which dates they will be in Sacramento, and which days they will likely be in the district.

If scheduling does not allow you to meet with the elected official, don't disregard an opportunity to sit down with staff. Because an elected is only one person, they rely on their staff members to be experts in specific fields and keep the pulse of the community. Identify the staff member who specializes in your field and request to meet with them instead. This will be a faster process, and still effective.

Whether you meet with an elected official or a staff member, the following still applies:

1. **Meet only with those individuals who represent you**, your client population, or your business. Requesting a meeting if you are not their constituent, and have no other connection prolongs the scheduling process and does not lend credibility.

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2. **No campaign talk.** It is illegal to discuss donations and campaigns in or around a legislative office. If you are interested in assisting them with their election, you can discuss it in private, away from the office.
3. **Keep it simple, but informative.** Limit yourself to one topic, and bring a fact sheet with key information about your business, organization, etc. It's likely that you will not have more than 20 minutes for your meeting.
4. **Follow the money.** Campaign donations are public records. Reviewing those records may help you find an important connection that you can leverage. Be judicious in mentioning a common acquaintance or colleague. Remember: discussing donations is prohibited in a legislative office.
5. **Make sure to provide the following information:** If you are a constituent, how long have you lived in the district? How many people does your organization/business reach, employ or serve in the district? What influential community leaders do you both work closely with?
6. **Follow up** within 2 business days with a thank you for their time and attention to your issue. Thank you notes should be sent, hand-written to each person who attended the meeting.

Of course, general etiquette still applies: be early to the meeting, respect time constraints and keep all conversation civil and constructive. Like any other situation, manners and respect go a long way.

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### III. Correspondence

While in-person interaction is an important component of all relationships and advocacy, written correspondence is an easy tool for continuing the dialogue and your presence in the office’s mind. Letters, emails and faxes play significant roles in the decisions made by an elected official and are often cited as some of the easiest ways to advocate and require very little time commitment. By corresponding with an elected official, you can provide feedback and updates without the hurdles of scheduling and preparation.

As with meetings, you should try to communicate primarily with only the individuals that represent you, your client base or your employees. When possible, communicate on official stationery, as it can lend credibility. Stationery with a formal letter head, a list of board of directors and a mission statement is the most effective because it provides critical information to the reader without taking up valuable real-estate on the page.

Begin your message with a specific request. Whether it is to vote on a bill, work to oppose a bill, or participate in an upcoming public hearing, open your letter with purpose. Include in the following paragraphs the motivating factors behind the request, your expertise or unique knowledge of the issue, and your contact information. A hand-written or a typed letter will send the message, but if typed, feel free to hand-write a brief comment along the bottom (i.e. *“thank you for your support!” “Was great to meet you at [event name]”*).

*Samples of letters can be found in appendix A.*

#### **Quick tip: Addressing your letters appropriately**

##### **Federal Representatives/Senators**

The Honorable (Full Name of Legislator)  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515  
Dear Representative (Last Name):

The Honorable (Full Name of Legislator)  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510  
Dear Senator (Last Name)

##### **State Assemblymembers/Senators**

The Honorable (Full Name of Legislator)  
California State Assembly  
State Capitol, Room (Number)  
Sacramento, CA 92429  
Dear Assemblymember (Last Name)

The Honorable (Full Name of Legislator)  
California State Senate  
State Capitol, Room (Number)  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
Dear Senator (Last Name)

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## IV. Letters to the Editor

Letters to the editor are typically responses to news coverage and, if published, provide a wide audience for nothing but the time and ink it took to write. These are short pieces (approximately 250 words) written to counteract or support information featured in a story, and offer an opportunity to bring your unique insight into a specific issue. Because information flows through these outlets daily, it is important to write and send a letter to the editor quickly. On average, there is about a 48 hour window of time to pen a letter to the editor and have it featured.

### Quick Tips for a Letter to the Editor:

1. **Keep it short.** These are usually 200-300 words maximum and may be edited for space limitations.
2. **Sign and date it.** Include your contact information in case of a need for follow up.
3. **Lose the vitriol.** Letters to the editor that are solely accusations, whining or name-calling won't make it far. Keep it constructive, keep it positive.
4. **Maximize the publicity.** If you do get published, send copies to your elected officials and other interested parties. Feature it on your group's website if possible.

**“As a citizen, we all have an obligation to intervene and become involved—it’s the citizen who changes things” -Jose Saramag**

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## V. Media

Think of the media as a megaphone. It can spread a message farther than you alone have the power to, and that is a critical piece of any advocacy work. Unfortunately, a journalist typically won't be quick to call you and ask if you have a good story that day. Instead, media involvement requires time and dedication, but can be very effective when done correctly.

Before reaching out to a media outlet, identify your key audience. Who does this issue affect? Who would be most likely to mobilize after learning about our cause? Are you restricted to a certain geographical area? Once you've got a good idea about who you're aiming to reach, you can find publications that correspond to those audiences. With the advancements in technology, the way people get information through the media has diversified. Blogs, niche papers, and local circulations serve distinct populations that share a goal, neighborhood or other factor. Be sure to consider these as well as while researching your options.

Making contact with journalists is dependent on you being proactive about advocacy. Press-releases, media advisories, blog posts and social media can all raise awareness about your issue and pique the interest of the media. If you don't have a large event or catalyst for a press release, don't be afraid to get creative. Volunteers of note, small milestones reached, new members to your organization can all be reason for a press release or a blog post. Once written, send them to the identified journalists and ask that they review the information. However, don't bombard them. Repeated emails and follow ups will only turn them off to your organization.

*A sample press release is included in appendix C.*

### **Quick Tips: Using the Media for Good**

1. **Research.** If you're aiming to be featured in a specific outlet, research what they typically cover and what kinds of stories they are interested in. This will make it easier for you to make a pitch.
2. **Be timely.** News moves fast in today's culture, pitching a story two weeks later isn't as promising as the following day.
3. **Be consistent.** Designate an individual as the "media liaison." Charge them with communicating with the media to help develop a rapport and help facilitate communication.
4. **Maximize the publicity.** If you do get featured, send copies to your elected officials and other interested parties. Feature it on your group's website if possible.

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## VI. Social and Other Non-Traditional Media

Meaningful communication between the citizenry and their government officials has taken on new forms in recent years with the prevalence of social media and even the sheer number of technical tools used by different offices. However, the newer forms of communication and interaction are impacting the ways the general population is engaging. A report by the Partnership for A More Perfect Union at the Congressional Management Foundation found that 87% of congressional staff in Washington, D.C. felt that email and the internet have made it easier for constituents to become involved in the public policy process. That same group said that technological advances have made Representatives and Senators more accountable to constituents.

Social media is an easy way to engage, and to get others involved. Having a presence on major social media sights will benefit your cause and help familiarize you with key players. Learn the sites and enjoy interacting on an informal level with people you may not otherwise have access to. Keep your tweets and updates brief and to the point. Avoid anything inflammatory but contribute thoughts and ideas of substance to catch the attention of folks and increase your reach. Including photos on these sites will help to interest more people, as infographics and clever memes have found a foothold in mass communications recently.

### Quick Tips for Harnessing Social Media Power

1. **Use it!** Don't be intimidated by social media. People of all ages are using these sites and if you want to reach them, you should be too.
2. **News in real time.** Sites like twitter now feature breaking news sooner than you'll see it in major papers. Use that breaking news to formulate a press-release or letter to your legislator.
3. **More images= more followers.** Research is showing that people will generally visit or click on sites more often if they feature images. Snap a photo of that day's volunteer, of a visit from an important community member, or of your latest promotional advertisements. **\*When using a person's image, always have a release form signed\***

**Democracy is the only system capable of reflecting the humanist premise of equilibrium or balance. The key to its success is the involvement of the citizen.**

**- John Ralston Saul**

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# Quick Tips Summary & Additional Info

## Quick Tips: Relationship Building

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2. **Keep a one-page hand out or fact sheet handy** to provide to staff or elected officials when you meet them.
3. **Do your research.** Not only will your conversation flow smoothly, but you will gain credibility by being informed and prepared.
4. **Offer yourself as a resource** on whatever issue you wish them to assist you on. If it's child welfare, education or small business, offer to lend your insider knowledge and experiences.
5. **Follow up.** Sending a quick email or a handwritten note (preferably the latter), is easy and effective.
6. **Be yourself.** Government officials and their staff appreciate a sincere constituent with a genuine desire to be involved in their community. Don't get distracted by frivolity.

## Quick Tips: Meeting with Your Legislator

1. **Meet only with those individuals who represent you**, your client population, or your business. Requesting a meeting if you are not their constituent, and have no other connection prolongs the scheduling process and does not lend credibility to you.
2. **Do your research.** Prepare by learning about the office's priorities, their legislation and vote history. All of these things and more information can be located on their official websites.
3. **Keep it simple, but informative.** Limit yourself to one topic, and bring a fact sheet with key information about your business, organization, etc. It's likely that you will not have more than 20 minutes for your meeting.
4. **Follow the money.** Campaign donations are public records. Reviewing those records may help you find an important connection that you can capitalize on. Does one of their donors sit on your board of directors? Do you work closely with a business that has contributed?
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## Quick Tips: Addressing Your Letters Appropriately

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Dear Representative (Last Name):

The Honorable (Full Name of Legislator)  
United States Senate  
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California State Assembly  
State Capitol, Room (Number)  
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Dear Assemblymember (Last Name)

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California State Senate  
State Capitol, Room (Number)  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Senator (Last Name)

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### Additional Tips:

1. **Campaigns and the Legislature are separate.** It's illegal to talk campaigns when in the office of a legislator.
2. **Photos are worth 1,000 words.** Did you get a snapshot of you and your representative? Send a copy in jpeg format to their office, they may include it on their website or other publication.
3. **Invites matter.** If you have an event in the community, or would like to host your legislator at the office for a tour, send an invitation and follow up. Get creative in your ways to include a legislator in your advocacy campaign.

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4. **Associations, Boards and Coalitions can bolster your message.** There's power in numbers, so consider Chambers of Commerce, community collaboratives and other groups as potential partners.
  5. **Positivity is important.** Your enthusiasm and sincerity can be the motivation for others. It is one of your most valuable tools!

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## Appendix A: Sample Correspondence

Requesting a meeting through letter or email:

**[Date]**

**Attn: Scheduler**

The Honorable **[Name of Legislator]**  
**[Address]**

Dear **[Title] [Last Name]**:

I would like to request a time to meet with you in the upcoming weeks to talk to you about the **[issue]**. My organization, **[organization name]**, is an active part of your district, working to **[purpose of organization]**. We look forward to the opportunity to discuss with you **[more specific information about issue]**.

**[Board Member XXX and, My volunteers and, etc.]** I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to meet with you in person and are willing to be flexible, based on your schedule of availability. I will follow-up with your scheduler in a few days to discuss further. In the meantime, should you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at your convenience **[Your phone number & email address]**.

Sincerely,

**[Name]**  
**[Agency Name]**

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**Follow Up Letter to Staff Member:**

**[Date]**

**[Name of Staffer]**

**[Position Title]**

Office of **[Name of Senator/Representative/Governor]**

**[Address]**

Dear **[Name of Staffer]**:

Thank you for your willingness to meet with me and discussing the importance of [issue]. During our meeting on **[Date of Meeting]**, I expressed my organization's hope that you and **[Representative's Name]** would assist us in [goal]. My team and I are eager to continue working with you and **[Representative's Name]** going forward.

I would like to extend an open invitation to you and **[Representative's Name]** to visit with **[organization's name]** to hear more about our work. We are passionate about [issue], and would greatly appreciate an opportunity to collaborate with you on how we may better serve our clients.

Again, thank you for meeting with me. It was a pleasure to meet you. If I may be of any assistance to you in the future, please do not hesitate to contact me at [contact info: email and phone number].

Sincerely,

**[Name]**

**[Agency Name]**

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## Appendix A: Sample Correspondence

### Legislative Letter:

#### Organization Letterhead

Date

The Honorable **[Full Name of Legislator]**  
California State Senate  
State Capitol, Room **[Number]**  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Senator **[Last Name]**:

On behalf of **[organization name]**, I write to ask you to support Assembly Bill 1111, which will **[explanation of what the bill does]**. This bill addresses **[brief comment about the bill's purpose]**.

Use this paragraph to explain the situation currently. What needs to change in your perspective and why? This is an appropriate place to discuss your involvement in the field. Make it personal, use your experiences or anecdotes. You can use this paragraph to include statistics supporting your request or other applicable research.

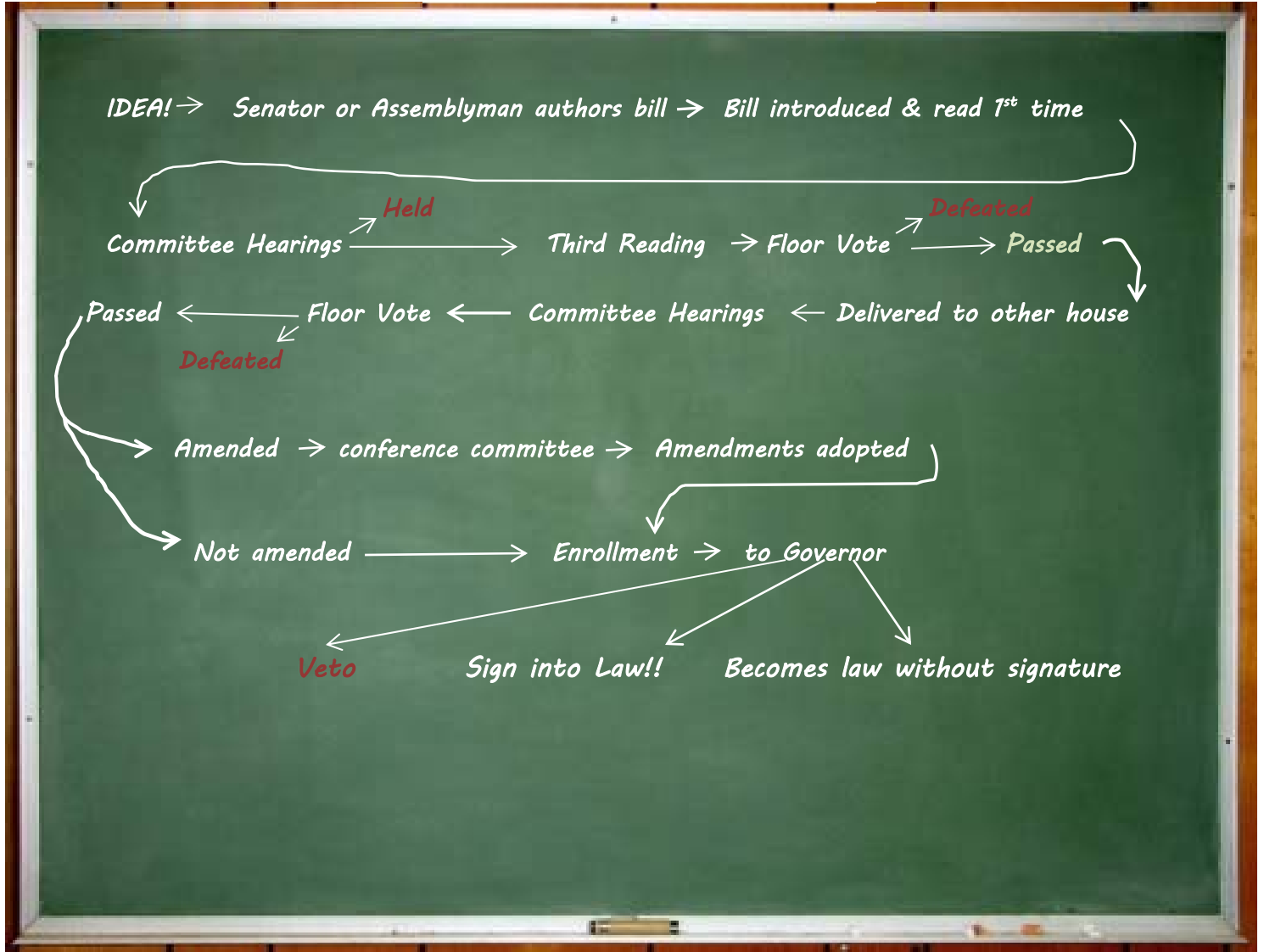
In this paragraph repeat the request and reiterate its importance. Offer to speak with them further if they have questions or are interested in learning more about any of the points made in the previous paragraphs. Include your contact information and thank them in advance for their help on the issue.

Sincerely,

**[Name]**  
**[Organization]**

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## CA Legislative Process



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## Appendix C: Sample Press Release

### Sample Press Release

**[Company Logo]**

Contact: John Doe  
Telephone: (555) 555-5555  
Cell: (777) 777-7777  
Jdoe900@companyemail.com

For Immediate Release  
Month 11, Year

### **Main Title of Press Release Goes Here** **Subtitle Goes Here**

(City, State)—Date- In the opening paragraph, write three to five lines that will catch the reader's attention and provide the basics of what the press release is about.

This paragraph can provide additional details, or a quote from someone.

Here you can provide specific information that can include details for an event, a website or where readers can get more information.

The final paragraph should be short and have a brief summary that provides independent background about your organization or the person you're featuring.

###

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