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VOL
01

AMERICAN DESCENDANTS OF SLAVERY

ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

THIS TOOLKIT WILL EMPOWER YOU TO ENHANCE YOUR
OUTREACH THROUGH LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY!



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MESSAGE TO THE FAM

I feel strongly that vulnerable populations, especially American Descendants of Slavery (ADOS), need to engage in policy dialogue pertaining to their specific needs, such as lineage therapy, criminal justice reform, affirmative action, SBA loans, voting rights, etc. Providing the tools and training necessary to partake as advocates and be confident and successful in the process, is truly what I hoped would emerge from my joining this wonderful advocacy effort. Thankfully, it did.

It is my pleasure to present the 2019 **ADOS** Toolkit. This toolkit is meant to provide you and your network with advocacy and leadership resources at your fingertips. Use it to engage #ados family, volunteers, and others in our work of addressing the losses that stem from the institution of slavery, Jim Crow, redlining, convict leasing, mass incarceration and immigration.

For advocacy to be successful for **ADOS** and beyond, it requires a commitment internally from the very top, across the board and bottom up. We need to engage at the political level (elected and appointed officials, major leaders), and at the organizational level (executive leadership), but also at the ground level. Thus, we need involvement not just from the decision makers or organizational leadership, but from everyday people, who ultimately are those most directly affected by policy decisions.

Thank you for helping **ADOS** and joining the many social justice warriors that have made the brave decision to tackle the grand challenge of demanding a New Deal for Black America.

Peace and Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Crystal D. Gordon". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Crystal D. Gordon, MSW

@SeshatCDG



Why You Should Advocate for Your Cause

Advocacy is all about empowerment and speaking up for yourself. It is something everyone can do and it is something that all of us should do if we believe in a good cause and in a democratic form of government.

Here are TEN reasons why you should advocate for your cause:

- 1) **You Can Make A Difference:**
It only takes one person to initiate change. One person – a single woman, man, child or friend – can make a difference.
- 2) **People Working Together Can Make A Difference:**
Collective responses can convince many people to take your issue seriously. The result is more education on issues, information sharing, networking, resource acquisition and exposure.
- 3) **“The People” Can Change Policy:**
American history is chock full of stories pertaining to ordinary people and groups who have fought extraordinary odds to make great changes. These changes weren't easy to achieve. It took active involvement – the advocacy – of people who felt something needed to be changed.
- 4) **Advocacy Helps Find Real Solutions:**
Aid provided directly to people who have been wronged, such as reparations, are essential. However, sometimes paying money is not enough to repair war damage. ADOS advocates, in particular, are thinking creatively and asking their elected officials for support to generate innovative solutions that overcome the root causes of problems.
- 5) **Policymakers Need Your Expertise:**
Few institutions are closer to the “real problems” of people than real people who live in the community. We see problems first-hand. We know the needs. We understand what works and what does not. Therefore, we have the ability to put a “human face” on problems and make them real to policymakers.

- 6) **The Views of Locals are Important:**
Increasingly, local governments decide how to spend federal money, giving local voters even more opportunity to have immediate, concrete impact on people in need.
- 7) **Advocacy Is Easy:**
There is no mysterious rite of passage to engage in advocacy. It does not take years to master either. You could learn how to advocate – whom to call, what to say – in minutes. Continue to follow #ADOS online to learn more straightforward rules that you need to follow, as well as strategies to make you effective!
- 8) **Advocacy Helps People:**
Everything that goes into advocacy – the research, the strategic planning, the phone calls and visits – will help your mission, not detract from it. Advocacy can enhance your purpose; it can be your best service.
- 9) **Advocacy Advances Your Cause & Builds Public Trust:**
By increasing your visibility and strengthening relationships with elected officials, advocacy can help your specific group's mission.
- 10) **Advocacy Is A Democratic Tradition:**
The act of informing, educating and engaging elected officials on policy issues is at the very heart of our democratic system. Various advocacy efforts have long helped to make America's democratic system robust. So, advocate for the things you believe; state your position, raise your voice and be heard!



Getting Started With Advocacy

Advocacy involves talking with elected officials and telling them what you think about issues that you care about.

To determine your State Senator and State Assembly Member's name, address and phone number:

- Go on-line to any of the following links:
 - https://openstates.org/find_your_legislator/
 - <https://www.commoncause.org/find-your-representative/addr/>
 - <https://www.facebook.com/townhall>
 - <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/yourleg.html>

and enter your location; or

- Call Project Vote Smart: 1-888-VOTE-SMART (1-888-868-3762), give them your 9 digit zip code (5 digit plus 4)

Make sure to write their name, address, and number down so that you can contact them again and again. Put the information on your refrigerator or somewhere it will be easy to find.

Now you can call them or write them about other issues, request a meeting, and get on their mailing list, which will keep you informed about what they are doing.

Getting their contact information is the first step to advocating for yourself and your specific issues (e.g., H.R.40).

**Don't be afraid to contact your elected officials.
[They need to know what you think.](#)**



Accountability with Action

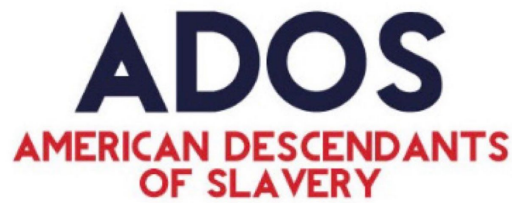
6 Ways to Be an Effective Advocate

1. Get your legislator involved in helping you address the problems created with legislative decisions
2. Make your legislators more accountable to you
3. Be more effective & targeted in dealing with representatives & senators
4. Be assertive and pro-active in getting help from your legislator
5. Increase your connection with your legislators and keep them working on your behalf
6. Change the way that elected officials are involved with the people they represent

The Process

- Register to *vote*.
- Figure out your state assembly and senate districts and *identify* your state assemblyperson and senator.
- Make an appointment to meet with your assembly member and senator.
- Talk to a couple of people who are also affected by the decisions and ask if they would be willing to go to the meetings with you.
- Convene w/ people before the meeting & develop a plan for the meeting.
- Go to the meeting and tell the legislator how you are living with the decisions (e.g., tax cuts) & tell them the specific problems you're having.
- Ask them for help in figuring out how to solve the problem.
- Once you've described your problem, let the legislator tell you how they are going to help you solve your problems. **LISTEN. AVOID LECTURING THEM.** If you hear yourself doing all the talking, it means the legislator isn't talking and you're letting them off the hook. You want them to be asking you questions about your problem. You want them to talk about ways that they can help you.
- If they tell you to call an agency, suggest that they call the agency while you wait or you can come back in a few days.
- Go back in a few days to hear what they found out.
- Continue to ask your legislator for help on specific problems that you have because of their decisions.

Your goal is to get your legislator to understand your situation and get their help in solving your problem.



Role of an ADOS Advocate

As an ADOS advocate, you will be called upon to take your message to local, state, and federal policy makers and elected officials – on a wide range of subjects, and through a variety of communication channels – all in an effort to nurture public support for issues that are important to you.

Before making contact with elected officials, it is crucial for you to do some homework in order to get a better understanding of the issue you want to address. So, learn about the elected official's views on that issue and learn the legislative process through which the bill or funding authorization will proceed. It is important to identify the issues that you feel best suited to address – match advocacy opportunities to your professional expertise, personal interests and unique talents.

Be sure to prepare yourself with talking points, fact sheets and “leave behind” materials before every legislative visit.

How to Make Your Visit a Success

- Be prepared. Learn about the official with whom you are meeting and the status of the issue you will discuss. Plan what you will say and stay “on message”.
- Briefly discuss the issue in non-technical, jargon-free language.
- Explain why the issue is important to you personally. If possible, link the issue to a personal experience or situation in the elected official's district.
- If you are a part of a group of advocates (e.g., ADOS), choose a spokesperson (preferably someone who lives in the district) and decide on a strategy.
- Expect to meet for about 15 minutes. Arrive early and leave on time. Be sure to thank the elected official for considering your point of view and your request.
- Expect schedule changes – an elected official's business must come first. If there is a delay, a staff member will handle the appointment. That's fine: staffers often are the most knowledgeable issue experts in the office and can be very influential.
- Remain positive and courteous.
- Don't use terms or abbreviations that may be unfamiliar to an official without explaining their meaning.
- Follow up with a brief thank-you letter that reiterates the purpose of your visit and invites the elected official to call upon you for help.
- Think long-term: Build an ongoing relationship with elected officials and staff. They'll be more likely to look at your interests and be proactive on your behalf.



Simple Voting Guide for the ADOS Network

Registering to Vote:

There are **3 ways you can register to vote** (Directions vary slightly by state):

- 1) Online. Have your driver's license and the last 4 digits of your Social Security number ready.
 - a) [Visit the official government website](#) on your desktop or phone. Select your state and fill out your information.

- 2) By mail. If you are old school, here is the answer: register by mail. Call your county elections office to have the registration form sent to your home. When it arrives, fill it out. Verify that you are a U.S. citizen who will be 18 years or older by the deadline. The rest is merely your name and address. Now mail it back in!

- 3) In-person. Registering in person is almost exactly like registering by mail. Go to the county elections office (or DMV/post office) instead of calling for the registration form. Fill it out with your information and turn it in.

Preparing for Voting Day:

Prior to election day, **familiarize yourself with the location** and hours of operation. Find out exactly where the voting location is to use your time efficiently. Do not be afraid to ask for directions if you need assistance. You don't want to wander around in circles wasting your time on such an important day.

Also, check the location's hours. Don't miss out on voting because you were too late! Do not assume that you can simply drop by anytime to vote. That is not the scenario—there are always set hours of operation at the polling places.

Vote ahead of time. If you are busy on election day and still want to vote, do not fret—you have the option of casting your vote early. Go in person to your county elections office and cast your vote early with an absentee ballot. Dates for early voting vary by county, so check on that and do not forget to bring some form of ID!

VOTE:

On election day, you will not be the only person headed to the polls, so expect lines. Therefore, it is imperative that you **give yourself ample** time to cast your vote. Do not try to vote in a rush.

Also, the wait can make you hungry, especially if you are voting prior to lunchtime. You may want to bring a snack with you to the polls and a bottle of water.

Another tip: bring someone else to vote. If you have extra time to waste while waiting, why not pass time in line with a friend? The both of you can have a friendly conversation about the candidates, ballot measures, etc.

Call to Action:

Voting is critical to our future yet the number of voters is dwindling. Do not leave such crucial decisions up to other people when they directly impact your life, your community and beyond.

Your vote matters.

Champion the change!

Your vote is your chance for your voice to be heard.

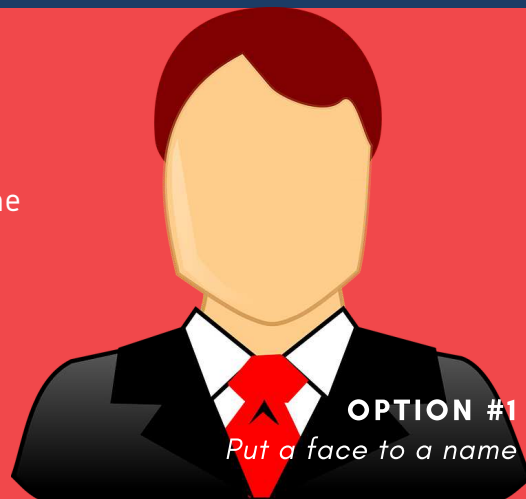
Now that you know exactly how simple it is to vote, what's stopping you?

4 WAYS TO CONTACT

Your Elected Officials

PLAN A VISIT

Call the official's office to schedule an appointment. Do your homework & come prepared with main points. Clearly and concisely state your position. Have materials that summarize your points. Several days after the meeting, call or send a thank you note!



WRITE A LETTER

A handwritten note is most effective. Identify the issue or piece of legislation you're referring to. Include the bill, ordinance number, or author. Give concise reasons how you are personally affected by the issue & how it affects other constituents. Be polite and courteous. Request a response from the official. Include your contact information & any organizations you're apart of.

MAKE A CALL

For Federal Legislators call: (866) 220-0044 & ask for your official. For California Legislators call: (916) 319-2856 & ask for your official's contact information. Identify yourself keep your call as short as possible. Try to cover only one subject per call. You may be transferred to a staff member, take note of who they are. Provide your contact information.



SEND AN EMAIL

Check the official's websites for email addresses & contact information. Follow the same guidelines as writing a letter. If you wish, include your mailing address. Use separate messages if you're emailing more than one official. Proofread your email! Use the email as a follow up to calls or letters. You can also quickly reach out to your officials using Twitter.



Tips on Talking to Your Government

Over the years, the public has given Washington an increasing number of mandates to address a wide range of issues and problems. Many activities in the US have a federal component, as well as a role for individual state governments. The federal government is involved in areas ranging from labor laws to health care, environmental regulation and protection to food safety oversight, welfare programs to education and civil rights. You get the picture.

The reality is that if we want to be a part of the conversation, then we have to keep talking. There are many ways you can contact your federal and state representatives and voice your thoughts and ideas – don't forget, they are YOUR REPRESENTATIVES.

The following are a few tips to keep in mind when communicating with them:

- Define clearly the area you are concerned with and what you want them to accomplish. Is it changing a law? Voting a certain way on a bill before them? Increasing or decreasing funding for that issue? Look up *Active Legislation* for what's pending in the current Congressional session.
- Find and contact your own *Representative* and *Senators*. You can source contact information and pending legislation for *your particular State Legislature* as well.
- You can find the specific committees handling particular areas and address your communication to them, as well as your Senator or Congressperson. (Click for *House Committees* and *Senate Committees*).
- If you are motivated, you can request a meeting with committee staff members or the committee members themselves. Staff members will be able to advise you about the legal and political considerations to your issue, so you can properly frame your communication.
- Get others in your state or district to write or call your Member of Congress, the more people the better (i.e., there is great power in numbers). Personalized contacts in the form of emails, calls or letters are preferable to a group or form letter. You want to both inform them on the issue and your point of view, as well as show that this has support from a significant number of others in that Member's state or district.



Tips on Scheduling an In-Person Meeting with Your Elected Officials

Letters and phone calls are effective, but not as effective as meeting one-on-one. Meeting your elected official in person is a great way to have a real impact on an issue, and ensures that your perspective is heard! [Here's some tips on scheduling meetings:](#)

- Make an appointment early! Elected officials maintain busy calendars, so making an appointment ensures that you will have the opportunity to speak to someone. Give at least two to four weeks advance notice.
- Make an appointment by calling the elected official's office and requesting to speak to the scheduler.
- Let the scheduler know that you are a member of the elected official's district and what issue or specific legislation you wish to speak about.
- Be prepared: Know what you want to say and what you want the result of the meeting to be. Practice ahead of time in front of the mirror and other people.
- Dress appropriately and arrive on time, but don't expect your legislator to arrive on time. They're busy and may have multiple meetings in a row.
- Always be courteous.
- Your meeting will be brief. Prepare a three-minute speech (or shorter) to give to each lawmaker and decision-maker you are meeting with.
- Tell them why the issue is important to you, and what the solution is. Make sure you "make the ask." Be prepared to ask the staffer or elected official to support the specific issue or piece of legislation.
- Depending on the legislator's availability, you may meet with a staff member instead of the elected official the elected official. Staff is trained to hear constituent concerns and will relay those to your elected official.
- Thank them for their time. If you meet with the staff person, indicate you will look forward to a response from the elected official.
- Always send a thank-you note.



Tips on In-District Group Visits

- Every Member of Congress and has one or more offices in their state or district in which they regularly conduct business. (In most of the larger states, state legislators also have offices, too)

Face-to-face visits with your elected officials (or their staff) in their district are a very influential form of advocacy. There are a number of times in a year when members of Congress leave Washington, DC, and return to their home districts/states for “Congressional Work Periods”. This direct lobbying can be fun, interesting, and highly motivating for those who participate! And if you can’t tell the story about the needs and concerns of ADOS and the importance of our issues, it won’t be told! A small, dedicated group can have great influence because our issue is not yet well known like other big issues such as taxes and budgets!

This guide lists the steps of setting up a group visit in your area.

Relationships are key to effective advocacy and organizing, so we encourage you to view all interactions with Congressional offices as opportunities for building relationships. Ideally you want those offices to see you and/or your organization as a credible, powerful, and helpful voice for ADOS.

1. Find the office

You can find contact information for your Representatives and Senators—including their district offices—by going to <http://votesmart.org/>. All you have to do is enter your zip code.

2. Assemble a Group

While it’s certainly possible and effective to arrange a visit for a single individual, we recommend putting together a group, preferably one that may include one or more ADOS or allies. Group visits are more influential, and the experience will build relationships and skills among all participants.

Identify the issue you’ll be advocating on (pick only one!!!) and the kind of delegation you seek and then pick a date for your visit and make a list of all those who are potentially interested. This step is important because you may not get your first choice for a time to visit, so plan for some back and forth with the scheduler in the office. Plan to keep the group fairly small, say 3-5 people. Ask one of the group to take the lead in the next step, working with the scheduler.

3. Work with the Scheduler

A number of Members of Congress post information on setting up a meeting in the district on their web site and many offices require a written request by submitting a web form. If you cannot find this, call the office and ask to speak to the person in charge of scheduling. Identify yourself as a constituent and member of [name your congregation/coalition], and request a meeting with the Representative/Senator on [name your issue]. Setting up a visit often requires several follow-up calls. **Plan for the process to take 2-6 weeks to get an appointment settled.**

4. Prepare for the Visit

- Research the official's record on the issue. Ideally you'll find something positive to thank them for that connects with the request you're about to make.
- Once you know where the office stands, determine your ask and what arguments/materials best support you. A friendly office can be thanked for their leadership on the issue and asked to do more. An office on the fence can be educated about the issue with compelling personal stories. If at all possible, plan to have a long-term care consumer or family caregiver tell a short version of how this issue affects their life.
- Your ask should be a specific action, such as voting for/against a certain bill.
- Identify your best arguments and assign each member of your group responsibility for covering one or more points. Learn about relevant legislation as well as effective arguments for your point of view. Ideally one member of your group can take notes.

5. During the Visit

- Remember to have someone take notes, and listen carefully to the Member or his staff's comments.
- Thank the legislator for their time and remember to follow up quickly to answer any questions they may have asked that the group could not answer.

6. Be a resource

If you're a member of an organization or an ombudsman program, you're a unique resource in your community. Bring info about its services for the office because public officials get many calls from their constituents looking for help. If you publish a newsletter, offer to add the office to your mailing list to keep them up-to-date.



10 Tips for a Successful Visit to a Member of Congress

1. You want to establish and strengthen a relationship with your legislator and his/her staff. You should prepare thoroughly, be polite, be specific as possible, and never threaten.
2. Don't be concerned if you end up meeting with staff rather than your member of Congress. In many cases, this can be equally or more productive.
3. Be concise but cover all the points you wish to make. In general, it is best to address a limited number of issues (three maximum). Most meetings last less than 30 minutes, so budget your time wisely and leave time for discussion.
4. Explain why this issue is important to you and to the people in your district/state. Speak from your personal experience and illustrate your points with real people and examples, if possible. Explain the consequences that adverse action or failure to act will have on individuals in your state, city or town.
5. If possible, cite sources of independent support for your position (e.g., opinion polls, studies, etc.).
6. After you make your points, request specific action, and do not be afraid to ask the legislator's position. If they are currently undecided, ask them to inform you by mail or e-mail when they made a decision, and to tell you why they took the position. If you are asking the legislator to provide leadership in moving something forward, ask him/her to provide you with a response or report on what happens.
7. Leave your name, address, e-mail address, affiliation, & phone number w/ the member of Congress or staff. Thank them for taking time to meet w/ you.

- 8.** Follow-up the visit with an e-mail thanking the member of Congress or staffer for their time and briefly summarizing the major issues discussed. Be sure to follow through on any commitments you made and provide any additional information requested. Keep in touch with the member of Congress and staff through occasional correspondence and visits to the local/state office.
- 9.** Share your experiences and learnings with us. Let us know if there are follow-ups that we should make. Ask us for help if you need it. Send copies of relevant materials to us also. You are not alone in the fight.
- 10.** Remember: Staying power and relationships are keys to accomplishing anything! Stay in the struggle and strive to maintain good communication with your members of Congress.



Tips on Testifying at Hearings and Public Committee Meetings

One more powerful form of communication with your elected officials and your surrounding community is to share your testimony at a legislative hearing or public committee meeting.

This can be the most effective way to get your voice heard by multiple decision makers at once.

The thought of testifying in front of a number of elected officials may seem daunting, but it's doable AND empowering!

Here are some things to keep in mind as you prepare to testify publicly:

- Practice, practice, practice. Run through your testimony ahead of time and get feedback.
- Arrive early to sign up for a slot to speak. Time is limited at these hearings.
- Prepare written copies of your full testimony to pass out to the committee members. They may not be able to get to you during the meeting.
- Your time will be limited when you testify. Keep your speech to less than three minutes. Make sure to hit the key points on your issue.
- Provide a clear and concise description of your position on the issue or bill.
- Present your testimony effectively using a friendly, relaxed tone of voice. Sometimes bullet points can be more helpful than a full text script.
- If you don't understand a question you are being asked, simply restate your position and be honest.
- Ask for committee's support before you sit down.
- As with the previous forms of communication, remember to be polite and respectful before, during, and after you testify.

***Note:** Make sure to always check in with trusted #ados, researchers and social justice warriors before you contact elected officials — they are powerful allies and resources in making your advocacy count!



Tips for Writing Your Elected Officials

There are multiple ways for you to get in touch with your elected officials to let them know your perspective on ADOS issues. One way is writing a letter. Read through the following tips on ways to successfully write your elected officials and ensure that your voice is heard!

Tips for Writing Your Elected Officials:

Letters from constituents are very important to elected officials, but they get thousands of them every day. Here are some tips to help your letters get attention — and action.

- Your purpose for writing should be stated in the first paragraph of the letter. If your letter pertains to a specific piece of legislation, identify it accordingly, e.g., House bill: H.R.____, Senate bill: S.____.
- Be courteous, to the point, and use specific rather than general information about how the topic affects you and others.
- Address only one issue in each letter.
- Keep your letter short — one page letters are best.
- State any professional credentials or personal experience you may have pertaining to the subject of your letter. In this case, your experience as a senior, as a caregiver, as a student, as a parent, as an entrepreneur, etc. connects directly to the pressing issues facing the ADOS community. Your story and perspective are important!
- Clearly state what it is you want done or recommend a course of action.
- Thank the official for taking the time to read your letter.
- Be sure to address your letter correctly also make sure your contact information is on the letter so that he or she can respond
- Post a copy online with #ADOS, preferably via Facebook and/or Twitter. We love knowing about your advocacy efforts!

US-Congress Specific Tip:

When writing a member of the U.S. Congress, it is usually best to write only to the Representatives and Senators from your district or state. Mass mailings to all Members of Congress rarely have much impact.

You can find contact information for your Representative/Senator at:

www.govtrack.us/congress/findyourreps.xpd

Addressing Correspondence Examples:

To a Senator:

The Honorable (full name)
__(Rm.#)__(name of)Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510
Dear Senator:

To a Representative:

The Honorable (full name)
__(Rm.#)__(name of)House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
Dear Representative:

**Note:* When writing to Chair of a Committee or the Speaker of the House, it is proper to address them as:

- Dear Mr. Chairman or Madam Chairwoman:
- Dear Madam Speaker or Mr. Speaker:



Letter to Elected Officials: Template

Below is an example for an individual letter writing campaign. The aim is to hold power accountable by taking action in advocacy on issues that matter to ADOS. This letter's focus is primarily on addressing reparations.

Here is the sample letter, courtesy of [Marrio C. Mathews](#), owner and operator of Minutes Till Dawn Productions:

[Your Name]
[Your Street Address]
[Your City, State ZIP Code]
[Date]

[Your Representative's Name]
[Your Representative's Title]
[Your Representative's Office Address]
[Your Representative's City, State ZIP Code]

Dear [Your Representative's Name],

I am contacting you on behalf of the American Descendants of Slaves as a resident of [insert your residency, district, county, parish here]. We would like you to do the following as our representative: 1) Support bill HR-40, 2) Push to include a guaranteed Reparations Package that is exclusive to the American Descendants of Slaves to HR-40, and using the agenda outlined at ados101.com, 3) Push to include Economist Sandy Darity, Lawyer Antonio Moore, Political Representative Yvette Carnell, and Dr. Claude Anderson in the process to steer the course of HR-40.

Failure to execute all three items outlined in this letter will subject you to be primaried in all upcoming elections.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your support of this matter.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]



Tips on Calling Your Elected Officials

There are multiple ways to get in touch with your elected officials to let them know your perspective on ADOS issues. These include writing a letter, sending an email, calling them and meeting with them in person. Read through the following tips on ways to successfully communicate with your elected officials over the phone and ensure that you are heard!

Calling Your Elected Officials:

- Remember that telephone calls are usually taken by the staff member, not the elected officials themselves. Ask to speak with the aide who handles this issue about which you wish to comment.
- Make sure to identify yourself as a constituent.
- Tell the aide you would like to leave a brief message, such as:
 - “Please tell Senator/Representative (Name) that I support/oppose (2. ___/H.R. ___).”
- You will also want to state reasons for your support or opposition to the bill.
- Keep your message to three minutes or less.
- Ask for your senator or representative position on the bill.
- You may also request a written response to your telephone call.
- Thank the staff person for his or her time.

REMEMBER: the best time to call is before a bill is placed on the agenda for a vote or before a decision is put before a local committee, so time your call out if you can.

Script for Calling Your Elected Officials:

- **STEP 1:** Introduce yourself.
- **STEP 2:** Ask to speak to the elected officials you called.
- **STEP 3:** If the he/she is unavailable, then give your message to the staff member taking your call.

- **STEP 4:** ADOS advocates could use or reword the following statements to express concerns
 - *I'm an ADOS and I demand reparations for my survival in this country.*
 - *You must listen to me NOW because you're decisions are directly hurting my community.*
 - *If you refuse to sponsor/pass the bill NOW, then my group will bottom out SHORTLY and the consequences of that would be catastrophic.*
 - *What am I supposed to do if you do not pass this bill?*
 - *You asked for my vote, now I'm asking for yours.*
 - *What do you plan to do?*

- **STEP 5:** Lastly, personalize your story so that they will have a greater understanding of the negative consequences for you, if they do not listen to you NOW.



Tips on Sending Emails to Your Elected Officials

Generally, the same guidelines apply as with writing letters to elected officials.

However, it is important to note that in our technology-driven society, email has become a popular, cost-effective and quick way to share personal views with elected officials.

Because of these benefits, legislators receive a high volume of electronic communication.

When sending an email, be sure to include the bill number/issue topic in the subject line. This will help ensure your message receives proper consideration.

- 1.) To find your U.S. senators' and representative's email addresses, you may use the U.S. government's searchable online congressional directory at <https://goo.gl/PnHvQh> or call the US Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121 and ask for you senators' and/or representative's contact information.
- 2.) For your [local elected officials](#), search online for their official websites to find their contact information.

Personal Message from Crystal D. Gordon:

I hope you find this toolkit useful and that it helps you to create your own highly successful advocacy work!