

Start Here

Start Here: How to Use This Toolkit to Take Action

Welcome to the Science Advocacy Alliance Action Toolkit! This guide is designed to help individuals and community organizers take meaningful steps to advocate for lifting federal freezes on science agencies like the NIH, CDC, FDA, and EPA. These freezes jeopardize public health, innovation, and economic growth.

Together, we can make a difference. Have suggestions for what we could add to this toolkit? Send them to admin@scienceadvocacyalliance.org.

Keep reading for how to get started!

Step 1: Understand the Toolkit

This toolkit provides everything you need to take action, including:

1. **Sample Letters to the Editor:** Templates for writing impactful letters to your local or national newspapers.
2. **Sample Letters to Elected Representatives:** Pre-written letters you can customize and send to your senators and representatives.
3. **Talking Points:** Concise, impactful messages you can use in conversations, emails, or speeches.
4. **How-to Guide for Contacting Lawmakers:** A step-by-step guide to help you identify, contact, and effectively communicate with your elected officials.

Each resource is designed to make your advocacy efforts easier and more effective, whether you're acting as an individual or mobilizing a community.

Step 2: Decide How You Want to Take Action

Here are the primary ways you can use this toolkit to take action:

1. Write Letters to the Editor

Letters to the editor are a powerful way to raise public awareness and influence policymakers. Use the provided templates to:

- Highlight the impacts of federal freezes on your local community, public health, or research institutions.
- Share personal stories or data to make your letter compelling.

Action Tip: Send your letter to newspapers in your local area or to national outlets with high visibility.

2. Contact Your Elected Representatives

Direct outreach to lawmakers is one of the most effective ways to drive change. Use the **Sample Letters to Elected Representatives** and the **How-to Guide** to:

- Write and send personalized emails or letters to your senators and representatives.
- Call their offices and deliver your message using the talking points provided.
- Schedule meetings or attend town halls to discuss the issue face-to-face.

Action Tip: Target lawmakers on key committees like Appropriations or Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) for the greatest impact.

3. Amplify the Message on Social Media

Bluesky is a fast, free, and effective way to spread awareness. Follow and tag us at @DefendScience for maximum impact.. Use the talking points and sample hashtags like #DefendScience or #ProtectScience to:

- Post updates, infographics, and calls to action.
- Tag your lawmakers, @DefendScience, and key stakeholders to get their attention..
- Encourage others in your network to join the campaign.

Action Tip: Share stories, visuals, and personal experiences to make your posts resonate.

4. Organize Community Actions

For community organizers, this toolkit provides resources to mobilize groups. You can:

- Host letter-writing parties to send multiple letters at once.
- Organize local events, such as town halls, protests, or webinars.
- Build coalitions with local advocacy groups, patient organizations, and research institutions.

Action Tip: Use the "How-to Guide for Contacting Lawmakers" to coordinate a large-scale outreach campaign.

Step 3: Follow Through and Measure Impact

Advocacy is most effective when it's consistent and measurable. Here's how to keep the momentum going:

- **Track Your Efforts:** Keep a log of your outreach activities, including letters sent, calls made, and meetings attended.
 - **Follow Up:** Send thank-you notes to lawmakers who respond or take action and keep them updated on the issue.
 - **Engage Your Community:** Share updates on your progress and successes to inspire others to take action.
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Step 4: Share Your Success

Your actions matter, and sharing your successes can inspire others to get involved. If your letter gets published, your representative responds, or your Bluesky post gains traction, let us know! Tag us on Bluesky or email us your story so we can amplify your efforts.

Together, We Can Make a Difference

This is a critical moment for science, public health, and innovation. By using this toolkit, you are joining a movement to protect the vital work of our nation's science agencies and ensure a healthier, stronger future for all.

If you have any questions or need further assistance, don't hesitate to reach out to our team at admin@scienceadvocacyalliance.org. Thank you for taking action!

Sample Letter to the Editor

Subject: The Cost of Silence: Federal Freezes on Science Jeopardize Public Health and Jobs

To the Editor:

Science saves lives. From developing vaccines that prevent pandemics to driving technological breakthroughs like MRI scanners, it drives innovation, supports over 560,000 U.S. jobs annually, and keeps our communities safe. Yet, the recent federal freezes on agencies like the NIH, CDC, FDA, and EPA are undermining all of these critical functions, threatening our nation's ability to protect public health and maintain its global leadership in science and technology.

The impacts are staggering: Clinical trials for life-saving treatments could be delayed, leaving patients waiting for cures. Disease surveillance efforts—essential for pandemic preparedness—are stalled, increasing the risk of uncontained outbreaks. Suppression of environmental data means communities are left without vital information on pollution, water quality, and climate risks.

These freezes also have an undeniable economic cost. Federally funded research supports over 560,000 jobs annually, many of them high-paying and tied to local economies, particularly in regions with major research institutions like North Carolina's Research Triangle, Boston's biotech hub, and California's Silicon Valley—or right here in [FILL IN THE BLANK WITH PRESS OUTLET'S REGION]. With budgets slashed and grants delayed, research institutions are facing layoffs, shuttered labs, and a loss of innovation. Meanwhile, countries like China and Germany are investing heavily in research, with China advancing in quantum computing and artificial intelligence, and Germany leading in renewable energy technologies, positioning themselves to outpace the United States in scientific advancements.

The toll is particularly harsh on early-career scientists, who represent the future of our research enterprise. Graduate students and postdocs are leaving the field in droves due to halted projects and funding uncertainty, creating a brain drain that could take decades to reverse.

This is not a partisan issue—it's an American issue. We cannot afford to weaken our scientific infrastructure in the face of mounting global challenges like pandemics, climate change, and economic competition. Congress must act now to lift these freezes and restore the vital operations of our science agencies.

Every day these freezes remain in place, lives are at risk, high-paying jobs are lost, and the United States falls further behind global competitors. Congress must act immediately to lift these freezes, restore funding, and secure the future of American science and innovation. Let's stand together to ensure science continues to work for all of us.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Your Location]

[Optional: Credentials/Occupation, e.g., "Biomedical Researcher" or "Concerned Parent"]

Sample Letter to Your Elected Representative

Subject: Urgent Action Needed: Protect Science and Public Health

Dear [Senator/Representative] [Last Name],

I am writing to you as a deeply concerned constituent in [State/District] to urge your immediate action to lift the current federal freezes imposed on critical science agencies, including the NIH, CDC, FDA, and EPA. These freezes, which restrict funding, communications, and operations, are causing severe harm to public health, economic growth, and U.S. leadership in science and innovation.

Every day these restrictions remain in place, lives are at risk. Delayed clinical trials for life-saving treatments, stalled disease surveillance efforts, and the suppression of environmental data are putting the health and safety of our communities in jeopardy. These freezes not only impact our ability to respond to current health crises, but they also hinder long-term advancements in fields such as cancer research, pandemic preparedness, and climate resilience.

The economic toll is equally alarming. Federally funded research supports approximately 560,000 high-paying jobs across the United States, according to recent studies. and drives innovation that strengthens local economies. Here in [State/District], institutions and businesses dependent on federal research funding are facing layoffs, shuttered labs, and lost opportunities for groundbreaking discoveries. Meanwhile, global competitors like China and Germany continue to invest heavily in research, with China allocating billions annually to advancements in artificial intelligence and quantum computing, and Germany leading Europe in renewable energy research, threatening to outpace the United States in critical scientific advancements.

This is not just about numbers—it is about people. Patients awaiting life-saving treatments face delays as clinical trials are halted; early-career scientists encounter job uncertainty due to funding cuts; and communities are left without vital environmental data, such as water quality reports, all as a direct result of these freezes. We cannot afford to let short-term administrative actions undermine the long-term health, safety, and prosperity of our nation.

I respectfully ask that you:

1. Work with your colleagues in Congress to immediately lift these federal freezes and restore funding and operations to the NIH, CDC, FDA, and EPA.
2. Advocate for transparency and accountability in decision-making processes affecting these agencies, ensuring that public health and scientific integrity remain a top priority.
3. Prioritize legislation that protects and strengthens the federal research infrastructure, safeguarding America's global leadership in science and innovation.

Your leadership is critical to addressing this urgent issue. By taking swift action, you can help protect lives, jobs, and the future of American science. I would be honored to discuss this issue further or provide additional information from our community's perspective. Please do not hesitate to contact me at [Your Email Address] or [Your Phone Number].

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to serving [State/District] and the nation.

Sincerely,

[Your Full Name]

[Your Address]

[Optional: Title or Occupation, e.g., "Biomedical Researcher," "Concerned Parent"]

Talking Points for Media

Talking Points: Addressing Federal Freezes on Science Agencies

Core Message

Federal freezes imposed on agencies like the NIH, CDC, FDA, and EPA—including budget cuts, hiring freezes, and restrictions on communications—jeopardize public health, innovation, and economic stability. These actions undermine job creation, weaken national security by reducing our ability to respond to crises, and hinder bipartisan goals of maintaining U.S. leadership in science and technology. Immediate action is needed to safeguard scientific research, protect jobs, and ensure the well-being of communities nationwide.

Public Health and Safety

1. **Delayed Clinical Trials Cost Lives:** The recent federal freezes have led to the abrupt cancellation of scientific meetings and halted evaluations of grant applications for research into cancer and other diseases. These disruptions delay critical clinical trials, directly impacting patients in need and stalling advancements in life-saving treatments.
 2. **Pandemic Preparedness Is Stalled:** Disease surveillance efforts are hindered, leaving the U.S. vulnerable to emerging health threats and compromising long-term global health leadership.
 - Example: The Trump administration's block on the release of the CDC's Mortality and Morbidity Weekly Report (MMWR) has impeded critical disease surveillance efforts, increasing risks for uncontained outbreaks and diminishing the U.S.'s ability to respond to future global health crises.
 3. **Environmental Health Risks:** Suppression of environmental data prevents communities from accessing vital information about pollution, water quality, and climate risks.
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Economic Impact

1. **Loss of Jobs and Innovation:** Research freezes halt funding for projects that support high-paying jobs and drive economic growth.
 - Statistic: Federally funded research supports over 560,000 U.S. jobs annually.
 2. **Harm to Local Economies:** Institutions reliant on federal research funding face layoffs and closures, especially in rural and underserved areas.
 - Example: Universities and research centers losing grants disrupt regional economic ecosystems.
 3. **Global Competitiveness at Risk:** The U.S. risks losing its status as a global leader in science and innovation to nations like China and Germany that continue to invest heavily in research.
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Social and Human Impact

1. **Equity in Healthcare Is Threatened:** Populations dependent on public health programs face reduced access to care.

- Example: Cuts to CDC programs disproportionately impact low-income and minority communities.
 - 2. **Early-Career Scientists Are Leaving the Field:** Young researchers face halted projects, lack of funding, and job insecurity, driving talent out of the scientific workforce.
 - Example: Graduate students and postdocs unable to continue federally funded research are leaving academia.
 - 3. **Community Well-Being Suffers:** Delayed environmental and health data suppresses public access to critical information, leaving communities unprepared for disasters and health crises.
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Solutions and Calls to Action

1. **Contact Congress:** Urge lawmakers to act immediately to lift freezes and restore agency operations. Focus efforts on key congressional committees such as the House Committee on Appropriations and the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee. Additionally, target influential lawmakers like the chairs and ranking members of these committees to ensure the issue is prioritized.
 - Talking Point: “Every day these freezes continue, lives are at risk. We need Congress to intervene now.”
 - Sample letters are included in the appendix.
 2. **Leverage Economic Messaging:** Emphasize the financial losses to states and districts to gain bipartisan support. Tailor messaging for swing states or districts with significant research institutions, such as North Carolina's Research Triangle or Michigan's University of Michigan, to maximize political impact.
 - Talking Point: “These freezes aren’t just a science issue—they’re costing jobs and harming local economies.”
 3. **Highlight Real-World Consequences:** Share personal stories from researchers, healthcare workers, and patients to make the impact tangible. Focus on stories from politically influential regions or demographics, such as researchers from key swing states or patients in areas heavily reliant on federal funding, to increase resonance with lawmakers.
 - Talking Point: “This isn’t abstract. It’s about patients who can’t access treatments and researchers who can’t find cures.”
 4. **Demand Transparency and Accountability:** Call for full disclosure on the decision-making behind these freezes and their impacts. For example, past transparency measures, such as the release of detailed reports on government spending under the Freedom of Information Act, have led to significant public accountability and policy changes. Highlighting such precedents can demonstrate feasibility and encourage action.
 - Talking Point: “The public deserves to know why critical programs are being halted and who will be held accountable.”
 - Information about how to make a FOIA request can be found here: <https://www.foia.gov/how-to.html>
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Crisis Communication Best Practices

- **Empathy First:** Begin every message by acknowledging the concerns and fears of affected audiences.
 - Example: “We understand that these freezes create uncertainty and concern for researchers, patients, and communities. Your work and well-being matter, and we are here to ensure your voices are heard.”
- **Be Data-Driven:** Use specific statistics and examples to ground your points in reality.
- **Stay Solution-Oriented:** While outlining the problem, always pivot to actionable steps that stakeholders can take.
- **Keep It Simple:** Use plain language to ensure the message is clear and accessible to all audiences.
- **Anticipate Questions:** Prepare concise responses to common questions, such as “Why does this matter to me?” or “What can I do?”

How to Contact Elected Reps - Organizer Version

How-To Guide for Contacting Lawmakers: Step-by-Step Instructions

Purpose: This guide provides actionable instructions for effectively reaching senators and representatives, particularly those serving on key committees related to health, science, and appropriations. Use this guide to ensure your outreach is impactful, professional, and results-oriented. This guide is designed to “scale” for organizers, but individuals may find it helpful, as well.

Step 1: Identify the Right Lawmakers

1. **Focus on Key Committees:** Target lawmakers who sit on committees relevant to your advocacy goals, such as:
 - Senate Appropriations Committee
 - Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee
 - House Appropriations Committee
 - House Energy and Commerce Committee
 2. **Use Official Resources:** Visit the following websites to determine committee membership:
 - **Senate Committees:** www.senate.gov/committees
 - **House Committees:** www.house.gov/committees
 3. **Research Your State and District Representation:** Prioritize contacting senators and representatives from your state or district. Their offices are more likely to respond to constituent inquiries.
 - Use the official Congressional directory to locate your representatives: www.congress.gov/members.
 4. **Identify Influential Lawmakers:** Pay special attention to chairs, ranking members, and those representing districts with significant scientific or research institutions.
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Step 2: Gather Contact Information

1. **Locate Office Contact Details:**
 - Use the official websites of individual lawmakers for their Washington, D.C., and district office addresses, phone numbers, and email forms.
 2. **Use Centralized Resources:** Platforms like GovTrack.us and Common Cause provide comprehensive contact details.
 3. **Download Official Apps:**
 - Apps such as "Congress+" or "Capitol Call" can streamline the process of finding and saving contact information.
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Step 3: Craft an Effective Message

1. **Personalize Your Outreach:**
 - Begin by introducing yourself as a constituent (if applicable).

- Clearly state your purpose, referencing specific bills, policies, or issues (e.g., lifting federal freezes on science agencies).
 - 2. **Focus on the "Why":**
 - Emphasize the local impact of the issue (e.g., jobs lost, delayed clinical trials).
 - Highlight how the issue affects the lawmaker's constituents and aligns with bipartisan values.
 - 3. **Stay Concise and Professional:**
 - Keep your communication clear, respectful, and to the point.
 - Avoid jargon; use plain language to make your message accessible.
 - 4. **Include a Call to Action:**
 - Request specific actions, such as co-sponsoring a bill, attending a hearing, or advocating for funding.
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Step 4: Choose Your Communication Method

1. **Call the Office:**
 - Phone calls are the most immediate way to reach lawmakers.
 - Use the scripts provided in your advocacy toolkit to stay focused.
 - Be prepared to leave a concise voicemail if necessary.
 2. **Send an Email:**
 - Use the official contact forms on lawmakers' websites.
 - Avoid mass emails; personalize your message for greater impact.
 3. **Write a Letter:**
 - Use formal letter templates included in the advocacy materials.
 - Address the envelope to the lawmaker's D.C. office for policy issues or to their district office for local matters.
 4. **Utilize Social Media:**
 - Engage lawmakers on platforms like Twitter or Facebook by tagging them in posts and using relevant hashtags.
 - Share public stories or visuals that highlight the issue's urgency.
 5. **Request a Meeting:**
 - Submit meeting requests through the lawmaker's official website or call their scheduler directly.
 - Clearly articulate the meeting's purpose and who will attend.
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Step 5: Follow Up Strategically

1. **Send a Thank-You:**
 - Express appreciation for any response or action taken, even if it's minimal. Gratitude fosters goodwill.
2. **Provide Updates:**
 - Keep the lawmaker's office informed of developments related to your issue, such as new research findings or constituent stories.
3. **Build Relationships:**

- Cultivate ongoing dialogue by staying engaged and responsive. Regular, professional follow-ups increase your credibility and influence.
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Step 6: Track Your Efforts

1. Maintain a Contact Log:

- Record all outreach activities, including dates, methods of communication, and responses received.

2. Monitor Metrics:

- If you can, track engagement, such as call volumes, email responses, and social media interactions, to measure the impact of your campaign.