

Advocacy Toolkit





For Alaska Native Communities

Welcome

Introduction

The Advocacy Toolkit, created by the Alaska Institute for Justice (AIJ), is a comprehensive resource designed to support Alaska Native communities in elevating their voices to advance tribal priorities. It offers guidance for various facets of effective communication, both written and spoken. The examples and templates provided throughout this toolkit can and should be used to help shape messages, prepare outreach materials, and support conversations with both community members and decision-makers. Readers are encouraged to explore new advocacy strategies with confidence by drawing insights from personal experience, wisdom from traditional knowledge, and counsel from Tribal leadership.

What You'll Find in This Toolkit

-  **Introduction** An overview of advocacy and guidance on how to use this toolkit effectively.
-  **Advocating to Public Officials** Strategies for engaging with elected leaders, including Tribal council, members of Congress, state legislators, the governor, and the president.
-  **Advocating to Community** Approaches to spread awareness and share information with members of the community.
-  **Next Steps** A dedicated space to reflect, take notes, and plan your advocacy efforts on the issues that matter most to you and your community.

Acknowledgements

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all of our Tribal partners, liaisons, and IGAP staff for representing your communities with such grace, strength, and dedication to the Permafrost Pathways Project:

Akiachak Native Community
Akiak Native Community
Chevak Native Village
Chinik Eskimo Community
Native Village of Kipnuk
Native Village of Kwigillingok
Native Village of Kwinhagak
Native Village of Nelson Lagoon
Native Village of Nunapitchuk
Organized Village of Kwethluk

Thank you to those who generously shared photos. We hope this resource honors Indigenous cultures and highlights the importance of subsistence practices in rural Alaska.

We are especially grateful to Lisa Griswold at the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium for your ongoing collaboration and support throughout the development of this toolkit. Climate justice work is made possible through strong interagency partnerships like yours.

Thank you also to the Alaska Native Languages Program and all other staff at the Alaska Institute for Justice who provided invaluable guidance on accessible language and cultural context.

Finally, we thank The TED Audacious Project and Woodwell Climate Research Center for their support and funding of the Permafrost Pathways Project.

Thank you. Quyana. Quyanaq. Txin qaġaasakuqing.

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01

Getting Started



Photo courtesy of the Native Village of Kwinhagak

1.1 What is Advocacy?

Advocacy means actively trying to influence decisions, policies, or public opinion in order to bring change or solve a specific problem.

An issue or problem gives rise to the need to advocate. The issue could be anything from frozen grant funding to declining salmon populations. Before you advocate, it is important to clearly identify the issue and the power structure around it.

What is the issue? **Why** is this a problem?

Write down or talk about the issue that you or your community are encountering. Write down all the ways the issue causes problems for you and your community. The questions of “What” and “Why” are highly connected. Try to identify what specifically needs to change to solve the problem. The thing that needs to change is the actual issue.

Who can fix the issue?

Think about who or what caused the problem and figure out everyone who could help solve the problem. These are your target people that you will try to reach through letters, emails, phone calls, and media pieces.

How can you cause the target people to solve the problem?

Think about what could make the target people act in your favor or your community’s favor. Maybe the target person would respond to a letter, an email, a phone call, a meeting, or a social media post, or a combination of these tools.

1.2 How to Use this Toolkit

This toolkit serves as a comprehensive guide to advocating for your community. Before you get started, take a look at the tips below.



Photo courtesy of Akiachak Native Community

- If your first language is not English, consider writing and speaking in your own language and requesting translation or interpretation services. The elected official may need some time to arrange those services, but you have a right to ask for them.
- Treat the examples and templates in this toolkit as suggestions and guidelines. You can and should replace the suggestions with your own words. The examples and templates are a starting point, but you can make the letters and materials into your own.
- Much of this toolkit is aimed at connecting you to your Congressional legislators, but the same tools and advice generally apply to connecting to the president, the governor, the Alaska legislature, and agency officials.

1.3 Lobbying or Advocacy?

Lobbying is a specific type of advocacy. So, if advocacy is speaking up to try to influence others, then lobbying is speaking up to influence specific *legislation*. Lobbying is a communication to a legislator that expresses a view about specific legislation. Lobbying is also a communication to the public that expresses a view about specific legislation and includes a call to action to contact a legislator. This toolkit is designed to connect you to your legislators, specifically in Congress. But not all communication to Congress is lobbying – if it doesn’t encourage a position on specific legislation, it is generally not considered to be lobbying.

Lobbying	 Non-Lobbying Advocacy & Education
Senator, please support and vote yes on the Save our Salmon Act.	Senator, the Save our Salmon Act would result in 10,000 acres of habitat protection.
Tell your senator to vote yes on the Save our Salmon Act.	Tell your senator your thoughts on salmon protection, without advocating for specific legislation.
Call the governor and tell him not to sign the bill that cuts funding to agencies.	Representative, the budget bill would result in the climate program being defunded.
Representative, please write a bill to create a new climate funding opportunity.	Senator, please help my community regain funding that has been frozen or terminated.



Photo courtesy of the Native Village of Kipnuk

1.3 Why Does it Matter?

Some funding programs prohibit using the provided funding for lobbying activities. Many non-profits and other organizations simply try to steer clear of lobbying altogether. Individuals, tribes, and companies are able to lobby Congress but may need to disclose lobbying under certain circumstances. Non-profit 501(c)(3) organizations are also able to lobby but must disclose lobbying or risk losing their tax-exempt status.

Organizations should consult with a tax specialist and/or an attorney to determine whether they can and should conduct lobbying activities.

1.4 Seek Approval from Leadership

Communicating with members of Congress or speaking to reporters or the public on behalf of your community is an important and serious step. Before you begin advocating or lobbying, you should seek authorization from the leadership in your organization, community, or Tribe. This process will be different for each community and organization. Check in with your Tribal Administrator, or other supervisor, to determine if you need to seek approval from the Tribal Council, or other governing body, before proceeding.

If you are in a partnership on a grant, or are a subgrantee, you should also coordinate with your partner or the primary grantee on your plans to speak to Congress, the media, or the public.



Photo courtesy of Akiachak Native Community

02

Advocating to Public Officials

2.1

Introduction

Advocating to public officials means speaking up to members of Congress, state legislators, the governor, the president, and other elected officials to influence decisions they make — especially about laws, funding, or policies that affect your community.

In general, advocacy can take many different forms — writing letters or emails, calling their offices, meeting with staff (in-person or virtual), testifying at a public hearing or providing public comments, joining with others to raise awareness.

Remember, you are an expert — your traditional knowledge and experience is your expertise!

The templates and examples in this section are designed to use when advocating to public officials. Advocating is an important part of a democracy because this communication can influence governmental actions and make a decisionmaker think differently about an issue. These officials are elected to represent YOU and therefore telling them your story is helpful as they write or carry out the laws. Keep in mind that asking a member of Congress to take a position on a pending piece of legislation would count as lobbying. Please refer to section 1.3 for considerations on lobbying.



Photo courtesy of the Native Village of Kipnuk

2.2 Tribal Resolution Template

RESOLUTION [#]

A Resolution to [description of the resolution].

WHEREAS, [tribe name] is a federally-recognized Alaska Native Tribe and [name of the tribal council] is the elected governing body of the Tribe; and

WHEREAS, [Name of the tribe] has experienced difficulty with [describe the problem the tribe is experiencing]; and

WHEREAS, [Name of the tribe] is experiencing the consequences of this issue, including [describe the consequences of the problem that the tribe is experiencing]; and

WHEREAS, [Name of the tribe] would like assistance from [Describe people or agencies that the tribe would like to advocate to]; and

WHEREAS, [Name of the tribe] would like to engage in advocacy to encourage [people or agencies] to assist [name of the tribe] with [the problem or issue].

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the [name of the tribe] is hereby determined to advocate to [people or agencies] on the issue of [the problem or issue] by using methods including [education and communications to legislatures, lobbying, media relations, etc.].

[Name of the president], Tribal Council President
[Name of tribe]

Date

[Name of secretary], Secretary
[Name of tribe]

Date

2.3

Talking Points

Talking points are the key ideas or messages you want to share when speaking or writing about an issue. In advocacy, they help you stay clear and focused when you're trying to raise awareness, persuade others, or ask for change. They also help make sure that everyone in your organization is on the same page on how to talk about the issue.

It's a good idea to get your talking points approved by your leadership before sharing them publicly or with outside audiences. Leadership can make sure the information is correct and reflects the community's views and priorities. They also may have insights on timing, tone, or how best to share the message for the most impact.

Depending on your organization's approval process, developing authorized talking points may allow a spokesperson to advocate widely about the issue. For example, you can use your talking points when writing a letter, talking to a reporter, in a meeting with an elected official, or in social media posts.

Make sure your spokespeople can:

- ◉ Describe the program or funding and briefly explain how it is structured.
- ◉ Explain why the funding or program is important to your community, all Alaskans, or all Americans.
- ◉ Describe the threat to the funding or program, or why it might be going away.



Photo courtesy of Northwest Strategies

Talking Points Example

Give background information on the problem or issue. Include traditional knowledge, Western science, and your own observations.

Explain why the issue is personally important to you.

Include the “ask”. If you *are* lobbying, ask the official to take a position on a specific policy or bill. If you are *not* lobbying, keep the information generally about educating the official and do not propose a position on specific legislation or policy.

Talking Points on the Salmon Issue

- In my community, our Elders tell us that the salmon run in Salmon River has always arrived in August, with salmon spawning in the small tributaries around the village. But more recently the run has changed its timing, the river water is warmer, and there are fewer fish.
- Western science also tells us that the air and water temperatures are warmer, and this can be harmful to the migrating and spawning salmon. According to western science, the salmon run in the Salmon River has declined by 50% in the last 10 years.
- I have personally seen how there are fewer salmon in the river. When I was a kid, my family would harvest many fish and fill our freezer for the winter. Today I am teaching my grandkids about harvesting salmon, but we can barely catch enough fish for one family.
- Please vote yes on the Save Our Salmon Act (SB 101).

Try the “1–3–1” rule: Start with 1 main message, back it up with 3 key points, and end by repeating your 1 main message.



Talking Points Template for Funding and Program Rollbacks

Talking Points

- There is a plan to get rid of the [funding or program]. But this would be harmful to me and my community. We need the information and services that [the program or funding] provides so that we can better prepare our community and state.
- [One sentence on what the program or funding generally does, for example, use the language on the program's or grant's website or announcement]. [One sentence on why Alaskans or your community in general benefit from the program or funding]. This [funding or program] in general was intended to help make communities like ours safer, healthier, and more economically prosperous.
- [One sentence on how the program or funding helps the economy, creates jobs, or develops the workforce]. [Give one or two examples].
- [One sentence on how the program or funding supports indigenous peoples]. [Give one or two examples].
- [One sentence on how the program or funding uses or protects indigenous knowledge]. [Give one or two examples].
- [One sentence on how the program or funding supports subsistence resources]. [Give one or two examples].
- [One sentence on how the program or funding helps communities prepare for recurring threats and hazards]. [Give one or two examples].
- [One sentence on how the program or funding helps communities respond to recurring threats and hazards]. [Give one or two examples].
- [One sentence on how the program or funding helps young people]. [Give one or two examples].
- [One sentence on how the program or funding helps elders]. [Give one or two examples].
- The funding and investment from this [grant or program] would have helped support our community. We are at disproportionately greater risk of recurring hazards and pollution even though our community's contribution to pollution is very low.
- [If you represent a tribal organization] The federal government also has an obligation and trust responsibility to federally recognized tribes. By taking away this [grant or program], we are concerned that the United States government is not meeting that responsibility.



Photo courtesy of the Native Village of Kwinhagak

2.4 Phone Call

A phone call to an elected official can have some added benefits compared to written communication. First, you may feel more comfortable expressing yourself through speaking instead of through writing. Second and more important, a phone call shows the elected official that you cared enough about the issue to actually pick up the phone and call. This is also true of visiting the official's office for a meeting, which helps raise the importance of the issue. But when you cannot get to the office in person, a phone call, even just leaving a voice message, helps elevate the issue.

Before you Call



Know Before You Go

Determine what your objective of the phone call is: setting up a meeting, providing information on a topic, or asking a question.



Keep It Short & Sweet

Do not expect your call, especially if it's your first time calling, to be a long conversation. Save the long discussions and detailed information for a letter, email, or an in-person meeting.



Use Your Connections

If you have the contact information for a specific staff person, call them. If you do not, call the main office number for the elected official.



Plan to Pivot

Be prepared to talk to someone, or to leave a message.



Mind Your Manners

When calling an elected official, always remain polite, even when you disagree.



Practice Your Pitch

If you are nervous, ask a friend or colleague to role play with you, to practice.



Photo courtesy of Akiachak Native Community

Phone Call Sample Script



Use this to practice with a friend before calling a Congressional delegate's office.

Hello?

Good morning, my name is Public Citizen calling from Anytown Alaska.

Hello, Mr. Citizen. How can Senator Somebody help you today?

I am calling to tell Senator Somebody about my concerns over salmon.

Okay, please tell me more.

[Use your talking points to express your concerns.]

Thank you for your call. I will let the Senator know about your concerns. Is there anything else?

Yes, I would like to have a meeting with a staff member to discuss this issue further.

Sure. You are welcome to stop by the senator's office during our open hours.

That will work. Thank you for your time. [Or, try to request a specific day and time.]

You are very welcome. Thank you for calling. Goodbye.

Thank you, goodbye.

2.5 In-person Meeting

Before you go...



Photo courtesy of Akiachak Native Community

Have a goal

Clearly define your purpose so you can stay focused, and ensure that time is used well. Knowing what you want to accomplish also helps the office know how to follow up. You may want the office to take particular action. Or, you may just want to get answers to some questions.

Bring materials

If you wrote an email or a letter on your issue beforehand, bring a copy of that with you. Print out photos or a map to have something to share with the staffer you meet with. Or, bring photos and/or a map on your phone and offer to email them to the staffer after the meeting. Sharing visuals can help start or keep a conversation going.



Photo courtesy of the Native Village of Kwigillingok



Photo courtesy of Northwest Strategies

Make an appointment

If you would like to meet with the elected official in Washington DC, you will need to make an appointment. Many meetings will take place in the office, but don't be surprised if the staffer is very busy and the meeting happens out in the hallway.

Explore your options

You can also call just before you go to make sure someone will be able to meet with you. Also, the state offices are generally open to constituents, and you do not absolutely need to make an appointment.



Photo courtesy of Akiachak Native Community

During the meeting

Introduce yourself and where you are from. Explain your position and what tribe or organization you represent. Provide a business card if you have one, or at least a piece of paper with your name, title, phone number, and email on it.

- If you are at the state office, you will likely be able to meet with someone in a meeting room.
- If you are in Washington DC, it's possible you would meet with a staffer out in the hallway, so be prepared for either event.

Always remain polite, even if you don't agree with something.

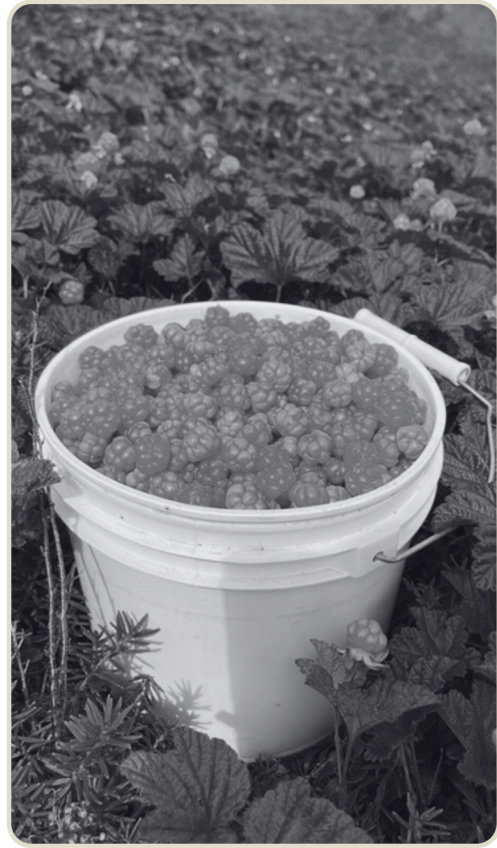


Photo courtesy of Akiachak Native Community

Before you leave

At the end of the meeting, consider whether you achieved your goal. If not, ask the staffer how you can follow up or try to get answers or help on the issue.

Even if you did accomplish your goal, ask the staffer how you could follow up on the issue in the future. It is best practice to follow up with an email.

Thank the staffer for their time and ask them to thank the Senator or Representative for their attention and consideration.



Photo courtesy of the Native Village of Kipnuk

2.6

Example Letter to Congress: Lobbying

The diagram illustrates the components of a lobbying letter. On the left, seven purple annotations with arrows point to specific parts of a letter template on the right. The annotations are: 'Greet the elected official with their title.' (points to 'Dear Senator Someone,'), 'Ask the official to do something specific, like vote on a bill or take an action.' (points to 'Please vote yes on the Save our Salmon Act (SB 101).'), 'Give background information on the problem or issue. Explain how what you're asking would help solve it.' (points to the paragraph about salmon and the ecosystem), 'Explain why the issue is personally important to you.' (points to the paragraph about family harvest), 'Repeat the request for the official to do something specific.' (points to 'So please help protect our salmon by voting yes on the Save Our Salmon Act (SB 101).'), and 'Thank the official and politely sign your name.' (points to the signature line).

Greet the elected official with their title.

Dear Senator Someone,

Ask the official to do something specific, like vote on a bill or take an action.

Please vote yes on the Save our Salmon Act (SB 101). This law would help me, my community, and all of Alaska.

Give background information on the problem or issue. Explain how what you're asking would help solve it.

Salmon are an important part of the ecosystem and help to protect other fish, wildlife, and plants. I have seen how other animals eat salmon and bring the carcasses onto the land, where they help the plants grow. But recently I have noticed that there are not as many fish each year. I am very worried about the future of our salmon and rivers.

Explain why the issue is personally important to you.

My family and I harvest salmon every summer. We go to the Salmon River to fish and we store the fish in our freezers to eat for the rest of the year. We rely on this resource to fill our freezers and so we don't have to buy other food from the grocery store, which is expensive and not as healthy. It is also important to me to pass on my love for salmon fishing to my children, grandchildren, and future generations.

Repeat the request for the official to do something specific.

So please help protect our salmon by voting yes on the Save Our Salmon Act (SB 101). Thank you for your attention to this issue.

Thank the official and politely sign your name.

Warm Regards,
Public Citizen

Example Letter to Congress: Advocacy

Greet the elected official with their title.

Introduce the topic and give a couple main reasons you are writing.

Give background information on the problem or issue.

Explain why the issue is personally important to you.

Ask generally for the member of Congress to consider the issue.

Thank the official and politely sign your name.

Dear Senator Someone,

I am writing to explain why salmon are important to me and my community. Salmon are a critical part of Alaska's economy and ecosystem.

Salmon are an important part of the ecosystem and help to protect other fish, wildlife, and plants. I have seen how other animals eat salmon and bring the carcasses onto the land, where they help the plants grow. But recently I have noticed that there are not as many fish each year. I am very worried about the future of our salmon and rivers.

My family and I harvest salmon every summer. We go to the Salmon River to fish and we store the fish in our freezers to eat for the rest of the year. We rely on this resource to fill our freezers and so we don't have to buy other food from the grocery store, which is expensive and not as healthy. It is also important to me to pass on my love for salmon fishing to my children, grandchildren, and future generations.

Please consider how actions in Congress could affect salmon. Alaskans rely on salmon for our economy and well-being.

Warm regards,

Public Citizen

Generic Letter to Congress Template

[Letterhead or Logo]
Your Name or Community Name
Address
City, State, Zip
Phone number
Email

[DATE]

Senator or Representative's Name
Address
City, State, Zip

Subject: [Short one-line explanation of what the letter is about]

Dear [Senator's or Representative's Name],

[One sentence about what issue, bill, or problem you are writing about]. [One sentence asking what you want the Senator or Representative to do]. [One or two sentences to tell the official why the issue is important to you and/or your community].

[One paragraph describing your community].

[One or two paragraphs giving more information about the issue or problem].

[One or two paragraphs explaining how the issue or problem relates to you and your community].

[One sentence to again ask what you want the Senator or Representative to do]. Thank you for your time and attention to this issue. If you have any questions, please contact me at the email or phone number above.

Warm regards,

[Your Name]
[Your Title]

Template: Letter on Funding & Program Rollbacks

[Letterhead or Logo]

Your Name or Community Name

Address

City, State, Zip

Phone number

Email

[DATE]

Senator or Representative's Name

Address

City, State, Zip

Subject: [Short description of the funding or program]

Dear [Senator's or Representative's Name],

[One or two sentences about what the funding or program problem is]. [One or two sentences to tell the official why the issue is important to you and/or your community]. [One sentence specifically asking what you want the Senator or Representative to do to help you].

[One paragraph describing your community].

According to President Trump's Executive Order 14153 Sec. 2(a), "It is the policy of the United States to fully avail itself of Alaska's vast lands and resources for the benefit of the Nation and the American citizens who call Alaska home". The project I am writing to you about is aligned with the Executive order because: it protects my community; it brings funding and jobs to Alaska; and it increases community resiliency. A project that accomplishes these things will help the United States avail itself of Alaska's lands to benefit Alaskans. It is critical to invest in Alaskans like those in my community in order to invest in Alaska and the United States.

Our project aligns with the Executive Order because it will protect public safety and our community from threats and hazards. [Explain how your project will help protect your community].

This project will also bring in funding, create jobs, and develop the Alaskan workforce. The project is therefore aligned with the Executive Order because job creation and workforce development will help Alaska and the nation harness Alaska's resources now and in the future. [Explain how your project brings in funding, creates jobs, and develops the workforce].

Finally, this project will also increase community resilience and self-sufficiency and therefore will also benefit the state and nation. [Explain how your project increases your resilience to threats and hazards].

[One sentence to again specifically ask what you want the Senator or Representative to do, even if it's just to contact you to discuss the issue further]. Thank you for your time and attention to this issue. If you have any questions, please contact me at the email or phone number above.

Warm regards,

[Your Name]

[Your Title]

03

Advocating to Community

3.1 Introduction

The templates and examples in this next section are designed to use when advocating to people in your community, members of the public, or society more broadly. This includes posting to social media, writing a letter to the editor, or connecting with a reporter to get your story told.

By having your story reach people in your community, in Alaska, in the nation, and around the world, you can educate and inform on a topic with your own unique perspective. People might not have thought about how a law or action might impact someone far away, but hearing your story makes them think about it and possibly change their minds. Sharing your story also builds connection, even if the person reading a news article or social media post might live far away.

People who are connected by shared stories are more likely to care about each other and care about the laws and actions that impact each other.

Keep in mind that calling on the public to tell an elected official to vote a certain way on a pending piece of legislation would also count as lobbying. Refer to section 1.3 for considerations on lobbying.



Photo courtesy of the Native Village of Kipnuk

3.2 Example Social Media Post

Keep it short & sweet. Give just enough information to capture attention.



Include a link to a source with more information or that prompts people to take action.

Always include photos or a graphic. Posts with pictures of people perform best!



- Use social media as a drum beat. Post about the same issue once a week or once a month in different ways, to keep the issue fresh in peoples' minds.
- Post about lighter topics to keep your audience's attention and then capture that attention with regular posts about the more serious issue.
- Post about the same or similar content across different social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, X, Bluesky) in order to reach a wider audience.

3.3 Press Release Example

Add your organization's logo and letterhead.

Indicate if this is for "Immediate Release" or "Embargo", meaning the press should hold the news until a specific date and time.

Include info for the person you want reporters to contact.

Include a headline or title.


Start with the news that occurred, and stick to the facts.

Include quotes that you can develop (get approval from the people being quoted) from one or more people in your organization or from partners. Try to get one passionate quote and one objective quote.

End by explaining what will happen next with the issue.

Use three pound signs to show the end of a press release. If there's a second page, add "-more" at the bottom of page one and "###" at the very end.

Give background information about your organization.



Allies for Salmon
123 Salmon Way
Anywhere, AK 12345

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 30, 2025

Press contact: Sammy Mon, Media Coordinator
Phone: 907-123-4567
Email: sam.mon@salmon.org

Allies for Salmon Supports Passage of Historic Salmon Protection Bill

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (May 30, 2025) – The non-profit Allies for Salmon celebrated the passage today of the Save our Salmon Act (SB 101) in the U.S. Senate.

"This bill is a big deal to help protect our salmon in Alaska and across the nation. Salmon unites all of Alaska, from subsistence users to artists. We urge our elected officials to not let this legislation slip through their nets," said John Fish, executive director of Allies for Salmon.

The bill now moves to the U.S. House of Representatives where it is expected to pass in the coming weeks.

###

About Allies for Salmon:
Founded in 1998, Allies for Salmon is an Alaska non-profit dedicated to protecting salmonids and their habitat. The organization has over 2,000 members in Alaska and more than 10,000 nationwide. For more information, please visit allies4salmon.org.

Press Release Template

[Logo and Letterhead]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE [Or EMBARGOED]: [Date of release, or date for embargo to end]

Press contact: [Name and title of your organization's press contact]

Phone: [Phone number the press should use to contact your press contact]

Email: [Email address the press should use to contact your press contact]

[Title of Press Release, giving a summary of the news event]

[CITY or VILLAGE, State in which the news occurred], (DATE) - [One to three sentences summarizing who, what, when, where, why, and how regarding the newsworthy event that occurred.].

"[One to three sentences of a passionate or emotional quote]," said [Name], [Title] of [Tribe or Organization].

"[One to three sentences of a more objective, scientific, or informative quote]," said [Name], [Title] of [Tribe or Organization].

"[One to three sentences of a more objective, scientific, or informative quote]," said [Name], [Title] of [Partner Organization].

[One to three sentences about where the issue goes from here].

###

About [Tribe or Organization]:

[Tribe is a federally-recognized Tribe or Organization was founded in DATE]. [Any other background information you would want a reporter or editor to know about your Tribe or organization]. Learn more at [website].

3.4

Example Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

The salmon are dying in our rivers. Our elected leaders must take action to protect our fish, which represent our health, culture, food, and way of life.

Since I was a little kid, I have always fished for salmon with family in the summer time. We always caught over 100 salmon. But last summer, during the heat wave, we saw the salmon struggling in the Salmon River. We caught fewer fish, and our freezers were not full.

We need to protect salmon habitat, rivers, and the oceans. We need stronger laws to help our salmon and waterways. We need strong leaders to pass laws to protect the fish and our way of life.

Please join me in asking Senator Someone to pass the Save our Salmon Act (SB 101) in Congress.

Thank you,

Public Citizen

Start with a catchy or shocking statement about the issue or problem.

Give background information on the problem or issue. Include observations, science, traditional knowledge.

Tell the reader what needs to happen to fix the problem.

Explain why the issue is personally important to you.

Ask the reader to do something, change their position, attend an event, or other action. This example requests lobbying.



Direct your letter to the Editor, but your goal is to get the letter published so it can be read by your fellow citizens. Submit your letter on a news website that targets your ideal audience. For example:
<https://www.adn.com/section/opinions/letters/>



Photo courtesy of Native Village of Nunapitchuk

Template Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

[Catchy, shocking, or captivating first sentence about your issue]. [Two to three sentences about what the problem is]. [One sentence about who should do something about the problem, and what they should do about it].

[One paragraph about the problem. Include indigenous knowledge, western knowledge, statistics, and your own observations.]

[One paragraph about why you care so much about this problem. Use your personal experiences and the experiences of your family, friends, and community to get people to care].

[One to three sentences asking the reader to change their minds, or take some action, or spread the words of your story.]

Thank you,

Your Name

Your Community's Name

04

Next Steps

4.1 Introduction

After exploring this toolkit, you now have a broad understanding of what advocacy can look like — from engaging public officials to building awareness in your community or even around the world. Do you already know how you want to advocate for your community? If so, go for it! If not, that's okay. At this stage, it's normal to feel unsure about where to begin or which strategy to try first.

Take a moment to reflect on the issue that matters most to you and your community. What's at stake? What needs to change? We've included different reflection methods — written, verbal, and visual — to help you process your thoughts and plan your next steps. Try them all or choose the ones that feel most natural to you.

There's no single way to advocate. Whether you share your story in a public forum, write a letter, or speak to your neighbors, remember: your voice is your most powerful tool.

Use this space to organize your ideas, draft messages, and imagine what's possible. This is where your advocacy journey becomes your own.

Your story, your strategy.



Photo courtesy of Chinik Eskimo Community

Verbal Reflection

Use this section to share your thoughts and ideas out loud. Try recording a voice memo on your phone, reflecting with a partner, or hosting a talking circle. Use the prompts below or create your own.

Community priorities

What change does my community want to see?

Why does this issue matter to my community?

Indigenous wisdom

What do our Elders and youth say about this issue?

What traditional knowledge or ancestral wisdom can help guide my advocacy?

Personal experience

How has this issue affected me personally?

Who can I rely on, or what resources do I have, to help support my work on this issue?



Use the blank boxes to come up with your own prompts.

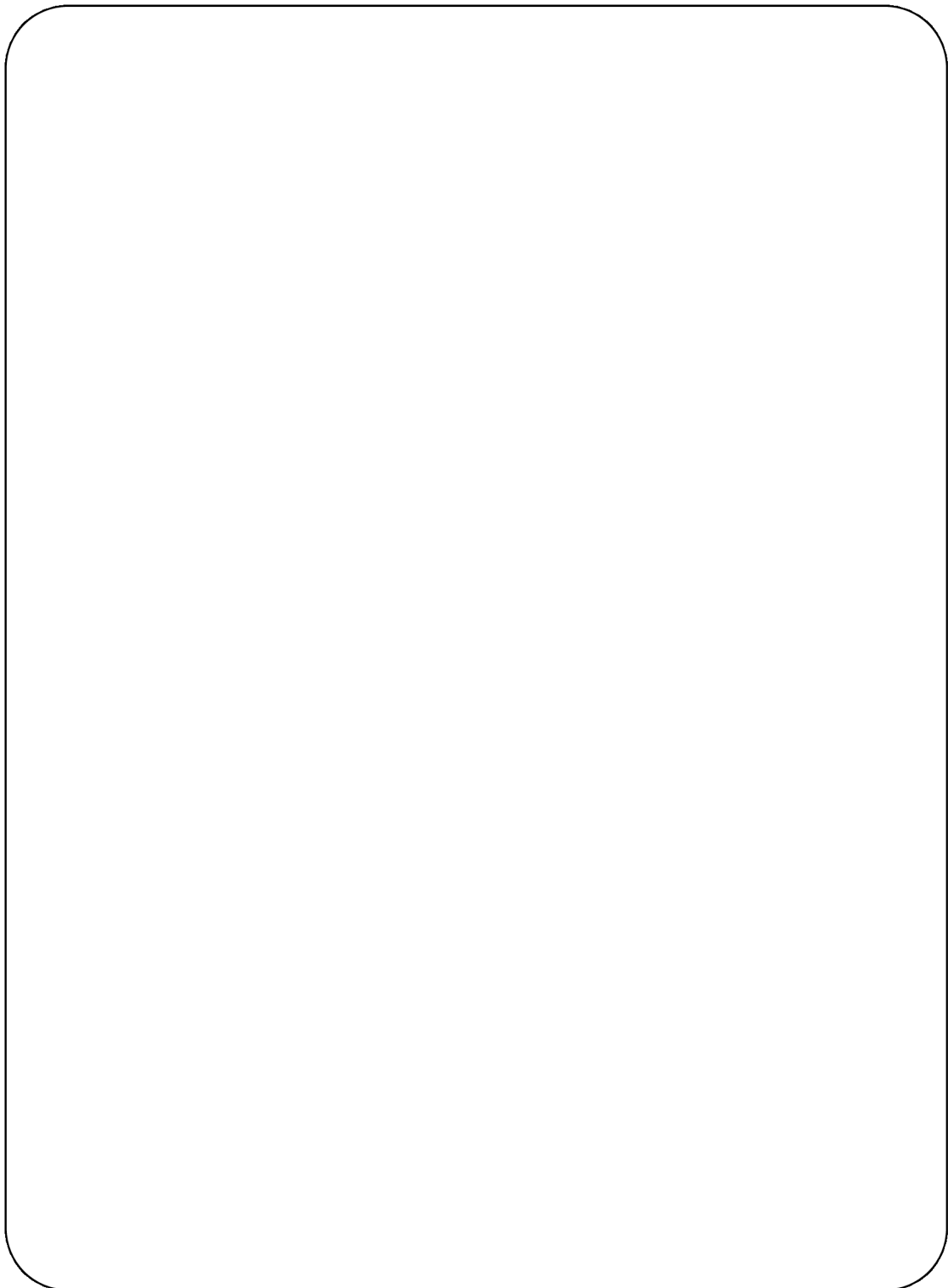
Written Reflection

Use this section to write down your thoughts and ideas. Journal, write a poem, tell a story, or draft a letter using the templates as a guide.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Visual Reflection

Use this section to express your thoughts and ideas visually. Draw a picture, make a map, depict a timeline, or create a vision board.

A large, empty rectangular box with rounded corners, intended for visual reflection. The box is white with a thin black border and occupies the majority of the page below the instructions.

Notes

[illegible]

Notes

[illegible]

Thank You

Mission

The Alaska Institute for Justice (AIJ) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting the human rights of all Alaskans. Our mission is to serve and empower underserved communities — including Alaska Native peoples, immigrants, and refugees — through education, capacity building, advocacy, legal representation, and language access services.

AIJ is home to three core programs:

- Alaska Climate Justice Program
- Alaska Immigration Justice Project
- Language Interpreter Center

Our Program

The Alaska Climate Justice Program works alongside Alaska Native Tribal communities to uphold Tribal sovereignty and protect human rights as the climate crisis threatens the lands where these communities live, love, and have thrived for thousands of years. Increasing flooding, erosion, and permafrost thaw are devastating these ancestral homelands, making our work more urgent than ever. As part of our ongoing mission, we are committed to dismantling policy barriers that obstruct Indigenous leadership and community-driven solutions — ensuring long-term resilience in the face of accelerating environmental change.

Contact Information

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