

ADVOCACY TIPS



Advocacy is a means of influencing your community and elected officials to embrace issues you care about. With **over two million Americans incarcerated** and an ever growing number of people being released back to our communities, advocating for the reform of the criminal justice system is more important than ever.

When you advocate for criminal justice reform, be sure you have a compelling argument, facts to back it, relatable background, and a human connection. You can visit www.prisonfellowship.org/justicereform for resources on various criminal justice issues and what's happening in your state and across the country.

ANYONE CAN ADVOCATE!

- **Be a brand advocate:** Talk about your passion for criminal justice reform in your sphere of influence.
- **Donate your signature:** Add your name to criminal justice reform advocacy networks and petitions so you can take action on legislative alerts at the local, state, and national levels.
- **Register to vote:** Be sure your registration has your current address.
- **Vote in every election:** Federal, state, local, municipal, special elections, or primaries—all are important to shaping your world.
- **Learn about your elected officials:** Visit their websites to learn where they stand on your issues.
- **Stay current on issues:** Read local/national newspapers, visit issue-related websites, follow your elected officials on social media, and sign up to receive electronic newsletters.
- **Evaluate your language:** Consider promoting the God-given dignity of each person first and the sin or circumstance second by replacing labels like “felon” with “person behind bars.”

READY TO TAKE THE NEXT STEP AS AN ADVOCATE?

- **Amplify your message** on social media channels
 - /PFMinistries on Facebook AND @justicereform and @prisonfellowship on Twitter
 - /PrisonFellowshipUSA on YouTube
- **Generate press coverage** by blogging, or submitting a letter to the editor or opinion editorial to your local paper
- **Contribute** to Prison Fellowship criminal justice research projects
- **Host awareness-raising events**
- **Meet with your legislator** or his/her staff as a personal lobbyist
- **Become a volunteer** with Prison Fellowship by considering one of the opportunities listed on www.prisonfellowship.org/action.
- **Sign up for our advocacy network**, and Prison Fellowship will notify you of opportunities to reform the criminal justice system. Go to www.prisonfellowship.org/advocacy-signup to sign up today!

If you share our vision for a justice system that restores those impacted by crime and incarceration, please join our growing network of advocates at www.prisonfellowship.org/justicereform. Together we can inspire the Church, change the culture, and advance justice reform!



10 ACTIONS FOR JUSTICE ADVOCATES

Remember those in prison



1 SIGN UP FOR OUR ADVOCACY NETWORK

Get 10 or more friends to sign up for our advocacy network, and Prison Fellowship will notify them of opportunities to help reform the criminal justice system. Share prisonfellowship.org/advocacy-signup by email, text, or via social media to encourage your friends to sign up for the network today!



2 DONATE YOUR SIGNATURE

Recruit at least 10 friends to donate their signatures at prisonfellowship.org/secondchanceact for Prison Fellowship's federal campaigns.

John Hancock 

3 FOLLOW YOUR REPRESENTATIVES ONLINE

Follow your elected representatives on social media. Tag them when you post about justice reform to your Facebook or Twitter accounts to get them engaged in the conversation. Amplify your message on these social media channels: [/PFMinistries](#) on Facebook, [@justicereform](#) on Twitter, and [/PrisonFellowshipUSA](#) on YouTube.



4 EMAIL YOUR LAWMAKERS

Send an email to your lawmakers in support of more proportionate sentencing and reentry programs by visiting prisonfellowship.org/about/advocacy/legislation. It only takes a few clicks to raise your voice!



5 HOST A SMALL GROUP STUDY

Host a small group study using Prison Fellowship's new Outrageous Justice curriculum (book, study guide, DVD). Find out more here: prisonfellowship.org/outrageousjustice



6 GENERATE PRESS COVERAGE

Scan newspapers for news stories about criminal justice issues and generate press coverage by submitting an op-ed or letter to the editor.



7 PLAN AN AWARENESS-RAISING EVENT

Plan an awareness-raising event on criminal justice issues at your church or on your college campus. Consider holding a testimony night that features several personal stories of people impacted by crime and incarceration, followed by a time of prayer.



8 STAY INFORMED

Visit prisonfellowship.org/justicereform for resources on various criminal justice issues and learn what's happening in your state and across the country.



9 SUPPORT PEOPLE COMING HOME

Collaborate with others in your church to build a reentry network that can help meet basic needs for people returning home from prison.



10 PRAY

Pray for those impacted by crime and incarceration!



10 TIPS FOR MEETING WITH YOUR LEGISLATOR

Preparing for a meeting with your legislator can be intimidating, but with these helpful tips it doesn't have to be!

- 1. Get to know your legislator.** Review your legislator's biography, committee assignments, and legislative priorities. This information can usually be found on the legislator's website but can also be found online (on sites like openstates.org) and in local newspapers.
- 2. Gather the facts to show that your advocacy goal is relevant.** Before you set the agenda for the meeting, gather the facts you need on criminal justice reform so that you can build a compelling case that will move your legislator to take action.
- 3. Set and confirm the time and place.** Reach out to your legislator's scheduler to set a meeting and then confirm the appointment closer to the date. If you are going with a group, plan to walk into the meeting together. You should also decide each person's role in the meeting. Who will be the lead speaker? Who is responsible for taking notes? Who is leaving behind relevant materials?
- 4. Use good etiquette.** Each attendee should introduce themselves and mention whether they are a constituent of the legislator. The leader should mention any family, social, business, or political ties to the legislator.
- 5. Prepare your pitch.** After thanking the legislator for meeting with you, state clearly and concisely the issue that you want to discuss, the scale of the problem, your position and your personal connection to the issue, and the action you want the legislator to take.
- 6. Include your story.** Stories grab us, they help connect us to others, and they help speakers draw their audiences in. The human brain does a much better job retaining a story than data points because stories activate the brain's empathetic response. Don't just recite the facts of the issue. Share why it matters to you. If you can impact the legislator emotionally, there is a good chance you can get him or her to take action.
- 7. Be brief.** Legislators are busy, so be prepared to be brief. Come ready with 1-, 5-, and 10-minute versions of your pitch.
- 8. Be clear.** After you make your pitch, allow the legislator to respond. Ask a direct and low-commitment question to which the legislator can respond "yes." Such as, "Can we count on you to support our efforts on sentencing reform?"
- 9. Wrap up the meeting well.** Always thank the legislator or staffer for their time at the end of the meeting, even if they did not agree with your position. Collect business cards from staffers who attended the meeting. Leave an informational packet and your contact information.
- 10. Follow up.** Always follow up with an email thanking the legislator or staffer for the meeting, reiterating your key points and any commitments the legislator made with you. Include all follow-up information you promised to provide.

Note: Don't be discouraged if your meeting is with a staffer instead of the legislator. Staffers are assigned legislative issues, and serve as the subject-matter experts for their legislator. While staffers are typically in their 20s, they can strongly influence their boss's final decision on an issue. Meeting with staff is still valuable!