ACTION TOOLKIT

Advocating for Science During the August 2026 Congressional Recess

Thank you for taking action to fight for science, democracy, and our planet!

The Trump administration's campaign to purge rigorous, independent science from the federal government and at institutions across the United States is putting us at risk: from polluted air, water, and soil; from unsafe food and medicine; and from our changing climate. We need science to inform the decisions that affect us all.

As climate-driven extreme weather ravages more communities, it is vital that Congress provide critical funding and staffing for federal agencies and programs that forecast disasters and then help people recover from them. Meanwhile, our fundamental shift away from climate-damaging fossil fuels to cleaner, cheaper, renewable energy sources must accelerate, and the fossil fuel industry must be held accountable for the damage it has caused.

This toolkit will walk you through the most effective ways to engage with your members of Congress this summer, build power with other science supporters, and keep up the momentum for evidence-based policies that will protect our health, safety, and lives.

July 2026

www.ucs.org/resources/august-congressional-recess-action-toolkit

Union of Concerned Scientists

CONTENTS

This toolkit is available online with clickable links at:
www.ucs.org/resources/august-congressional-recess-action-toolkit

Policy Priorities and Messaging Guidance

This August, you can make a real difference by getting policymakers on the record—if you can persuade them to make commitments that would prevent more harm to science, democracy, and our planet; begin to repair the damage; and lay the groundwork for a safer, healthier future.

Ask your federal elected official to publicly commit to one or more of these four essential policy priorities:

1. Support the Scientific Integrity Act
2. Fund the agencies that protect us from climate-driven extreme weather
3. Oppose immunity for Big Oil
4. Tackle the energy affordability crisis head-on

Below, we describe each of these policy priorities and what they would mean for restoring evidence-based science and policy—getting you ready to take these messages to your elected representatives this August.

1. Support the Scientific Integrity Act (S. 4545/H.R. 1106)

What Is It and Why Is It Important?

- Scientific integrity is the principle that scientific research and evidence should guide public policy without being censored, manipulated, or distorted by political or corporate interests.
- From public health threats to environmental risks, science enables policymakers to understand complex changes and create policies to address them and to protect our communities.
- Scientific integrity is an essential safeguard for a healthy democracy. By allowing people to examine the evidence behind policy decisions and establishing evidence-based guardrails against political and corporate interference, it supports our system of checks and balances and ensures policies serve the public interest.
- Since the start of the second Trump administration, there have been more than 570 attacks on science. Approximately 33 percent of those attacks (including political interference in scientific studies, censorship of federal scientists, disbanding scientific advisory committees, and restricting the use of key public health data) could be violations of a federal scientific integrity law—if the United States had one!

Understanding the Impact

- At the beginning of 2025, the Trump administration delayed a CDC report showing how bird flu was spreading across the country.
- In August 2025, the administration's Office of the Director of National Intelligence eliminated the group responsible for publishing the Global Trends report, which lays out the challenges the United States and the world might face in coming decades. This leaves a massive gap in US intelligence.
- Over the past year and a half, the federal government has blocked the publication of multiple studies proving the safety of COVID and shingles vaccines—part of a pattern of spreading disinformation and suppressing scientific reports.
- Can you think of a way these attacks have affected you, your family, or your local community? Keep that in mind when you consider questions to ask your congressperson, as discussed later in this toolkit.

This August, Every Member of Congress Should Support the Scientific Integrity Act

- The bipartisan Scientific Integrity Act would put into law protections against censorship, manipulation, and politically motivated findings.
- It would also require federal agencies that fund, conduct, or oversee scientific research to adopt, enforce, and maintain strong scientific integrity policies.
- Scientific integrity policies required under the law would make federal agencies less vulnerable to political shifts, help prevent conflicts of interest, and hold scientists to the highest standards.

Go Deeper

- The Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) Attacks on Science Tracker
- Read about recent progress of the Scientific Integrity Act in Congress
- Read the UCS policy brief on the Scientific Integrity Act
- Read the text of the Scientific Integrity Act

2. Fund the Agencies that Protect Us from Climate-driven Extreme Weather

What Is It and Why Is It Important?

- Danger Season is the time of year—roughly May through October—when climate change drives more frequent and intense extreme heat, flooding, wildfires, hurricanes, and poor air quality. Because of fossil-fueled climate change, each year brings new degrees of danger, but 2026 is uniquely perilous.

- Budget and staff cuts to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)—including the National Hurricane Center and National Weather Service—have jeopardized the forecasting, early warning, and science capacity that communities depend on to stay safe.

- With deep staffing and budget cuts to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and cuts, delays, and politicization of disaster response, the administration is leaving communities to fend for themselves.

- Congress can help protect communities during Danger Season by ensuring NOAA and FEMA have the funding, staffing, and scientific capacity needed to prepare for, respond to, and recover from climate disasters.

Understanding the Impact

- Every person living in the United States experienced an extreme weather alert during last year's Danger Season, and since 2020, the United States has experienced 143 weather and climate disasters costing more than $1 billion each.

- Communities rely on timely weather forecasts, emergency alerts, and disaster response to protect lives, homes, businesses, and critical infrastructure. Families with lower incomes, renters, outdoor workers, older adults, people with disabilities, and communities that have experienced historic underinvestment often face the greatest risks and the longest recoveries.

- The Trump administration has responded to this growing crisis by attacking the funding, staffing, and missions of NOAA, FEMA, the National Center for Atmospheric Research, and other federal agencies that perform critical scientific research and disaster response.

- How has Danger Season affected you, your family, or your local community? Keep that in mind when you consider questions to ask your congressperson, as discussed later in this toolkit.

This August, Every Member of Congress Must:

- Protect the funding and staffing of NOAA and FEMA

- Oppose efforts that weaken the nation's ability to forecast, prepare for, respond to, and recover from climate-fueled disasters

- Ensure communities have the scientific information and emergency resources they need during Danger Season

You can call for action at https://secure.ucs.org/a/2025-protect-noaa-fema-from-budget-cuts.

Go Deeper

- Danger Season Is Here Again, with Triple the Danger for 2026

- We Need a Strong and Independent NOAA to Protect Our Lives and Homes from Climate Change
- FEMA Review Council Report, Like President Trump, Is Out of Touch with Reality
- The President's FY27 Budget Request: More Bad News For Science
- UCS Danger Season blog series and webpage

3. Oppose Immunity for Big Oil

What Is It and Why Is It Important?

- More than one-third of industrial heat-trapping emissions to date can be traced to just 26 companies, including major oil and gas companies like Chevron and ExxonMobil.
- The fossil fuel industry has known since the 1950s about the dangers posed by fossil-fueled climate change, but poured millions of dollars into misleading the public and preventing climate action.
- Now, cities, counties, states, and Tribal nations representing more than one-quarter of US residents are suing to hold oil and gas companies accountable for their role in the climate crisis, alleging deceptive practices and consumer fraud.
- Many states are also pursuing legislation such as climate "superfund" bills as meaningful complementary actions.
- In order to avoid defending their actions in court, the fossil fuel industry is lobbying Congress for *total* legal immunity from liability, similar to the 2005 law that shields the gun industry. The industry's allies in Congress have introduced the so-called Stop Climate Shakedowns Act of 2026 (S. 4340, H.R. 8330), which would give oil and gas companies sweeping immunity against legal and financial accountability for climate change damages. The bill also attempts to legislate what counts as valid scientific research. We cannot allow this to happen.

Understanding the Impact

- Legal immunity for Big Oil would prevent communities from holding the industry accountable for its deceptive conduct and the devastating climate impacts it has caused, and would allow the industry to act with even greater impunity.
- Big polluters should not be above the law. Communities seeking justice deserve a fair and comprehensive hearing, rather than having their concerns swept aside in favor of a rich, powerful, heavily polluting industry.
- This bill undermines states' rights and local authority. It would override state consumer protection laws, nuisance claims, and tort remedies that states have traditionally controlled—allowing a federal law to silence state courts and invalidate laws passed by state legislatures.

- What would it mean to you, your family or your local community if Big Oil was given a free pass on contributing to climate change, pocketing record profits while communities shoulder increasing climate costs? Keep that in mind when you consider questions to ask your congressperson, as discussed later in this toolkit.

This August, Every Member of Congress Should Oppose Immunity for Big Oil

- Tell your members of Congress they must oppose the Stop Climate Shakedowns Act of 2026 (S. 4340, H.R. 8330), which would grant blanket immunity to the fossil fuel industry.

- Congress must protect our access to justice instead of yielding to corporate greed. We need to be able to defend our clean air, water, and a livable climate through the courts.

Go Deeper

- Rep. Hageman Introduces Bill to Grant Big Oil Sweeping Legal Immunity

- Big Oil Borrowing from Gun Industry's Playbook: Blanket Immunity to Protect Profits

- *Decades of Deceit: The Case Against Major Fossil Fuel Companies for Climate Fraud and Damages*

- How Climate Superfund Bills Use Science to Make Polluters Pay

4. Tackle the Energy Affordability Crisis Head-On

What Is It and Why Is It Important?

- People across the country are reckoning with rapidly rising electricity costs. One in three households struggled to afford their energy bills last year.

- The emerging onslaught of power-hungry data centers, propelled by Big Tech's no-holds-barred pursuit of artificial intelligence, is threatening to turn these affordability challenges into a runaway crisis. These data centers and the infrastructure that powers them are also ratcheting up pollution harmful to health and the environment, threatening electricity system reliability, stressing area water supplies, and disrupting community well-being.

- Instead of addressing these economic, health, and environmental issues to deliver urgently needed relief, however, the Trump administration—aided by the majority in Congress—has repeatedly acted to worsen the energy crisis, not improve it, putting polluter profits and cynical politics over the best interests of the nation as a whole. People are suffering as a result.

Understanding the Impact

Instead of delivering real solutions to tackle growing energy challenges, the Trump administration has been pushing policies that make these challenges worse, including:

- **Undermining clean energy.** The Trump administration has actively and explicitly undermined the deployment of wind and solar projects and energy efficiency solutions across the country, even though they are fast to deploy, cost-effective, and reliable. By directly blocking the nation's best response to current energy challenges, the Trump administration is exacerbating every dimension of the problem.

- **Boosting fossil fuels.** While blocking clean energy solutions, the Trump administration has been simultaneously working to perpetuate the nation's overreliance on fossil fuels by slashing pollution standards and subsidizing fossil fuel use. This is exposing communities across the country to far higher levels of pollution, increasing consumer exposure to fossil fuel price volatility, and wasting hundreds of millions of public dollars that prop up faltering coal plants. These actions send us in the wrong direction on public health, climate, and affordability.

- **Enabling the unchecked buildout of data centers.** Though the Trump administration has talked about holding tech companies accountable for the costs of data centers being added to the grid, in reality, the administration's actions have repeatedly done the opposite. As a result, while communities across the country are reeling from the sudden surge in data center development, the administration is not just failing to deliver real solutions, it is actively removing the few tools that currently exist to hold Big Tech accountable.

- Why is access to clean energy and accountability for fossil fuel polluters and data centers important to you, your family, or your local community? Keep that in mind when you consider questions to ask your congressperson, as discussed later in this toolkit.

This August, Every Member of Congress Should:

- **Stop attacks on clean energy and handouts for fossil fuels.** Call out the Trump administration for blocking the deployment of wind and solar projects and subsidizing fossil fuels.

- **Advance clean energy solutions.** Support forward-looking energy policies that recognize clean energy, energy efficiency, and grid modernization as key tools for easing the energy affordability crisis.

- **Confront data center harms.** Push for policies and regulations that deal with the risks and dangers posed by data centers to communities, the energy system, and the environment.

Go Deeper

- Electricity Bills are High. Trump Administration Policies are Set to Make them Soar.

- The Enormous Opportunity Costs of the Trump Budget Bill's Attacks on Clean Energy

- President Trump's Coal Bailouts Lock-In Higher Costs, Forestall Real Solutions

- UCS blog series on data centers

How to Reach Your Member of Congress

Now that you know more about the policies worth fighting for during the August recess, you need to know how to make sure your voice is heard by your elected representative. In the following sections we will cover three approaches to securing a public commitment from your congressperson: delivering petitions, using social media, and attending a town hall meeting.

Collecting and Delivering Petitions to Your Member of Congress

Whether you are new to advocacy or a seasoned organizer, you bring something unique to this work: your scientific expertise, community credibility, and deep relationships. This guide will help you put all of that to work in service of the Science Rising campaign.

Science Rising (sciencerising.org) is a UCS initiative that unites scientists and science supporters to counter authoritarianism and mobilize in defense of science and our democracy.

1. What Is a Petition?

A petition is one of the most accessible advocacy tools available to you, a tangible record of constituent support that proves real people in a congressperson's district care about an issue and want their representative to act. Petitions work because they demonstrate organized, local pressure. A single constituent call matters, but a petition signed by dozens of constituents and delivered in person signals something harder to ignore: that a credible, mobilized community is paying attention and expects a response. They're also a natural bridge to requesting an ongoing relationship with your representative's office.

Why Your Voice Matters

Petitions are a powerful way for all constituents to hold their elected officials accountable, and this campaign is open to any UCS supporter who wants to get involved. That said, if you're a scientist, your voice carries particular weight in advocacy contexts—your expertise lends authority to the ask, and your community relationships make the signatures you collect meaningful.

2. Start with a Clear Goal

Before you collect a single signature, be clear about what you are asking for. Your petition should be anchored in the Science Rising campaign and tied to a specific, actionable ask: one that names the bill or policy threat, requests a concrete action, and can be explained in a sentence or two to anyone, regardless of their science background. Vague asks lose people; specific asks build credibility and give your representative's office something concrete to respond to.

Example Ask

"We are calling on Rep. [Name] to [specific action] [bill name or policy], which would [plain-language description of what it does and why it matters to your community]."

The more specific, the better.

Comparing a Weak Ask Versus a Strong One

Weak: “Do more to address affordability.”

Strong: “We are calling on Rep. [Name] to call on President Trump to dramatically increase federal approvals for renewable energy projects.”

3. How to Prepare

Supplies

You should bring two or three clipboards, plenty of pens, printed petition sheets, a folder to keep completed sheets organized, your talking points, and (optionally) a QR code or short link for people who prefer to sign digitally.

Printing the Petition

Your petition sheet should be clean, readable, and clearly tied to the Science Rising campaign. Include the member of Congress being petitioned and signature lines with space for full name, city, zip code, and email. Format on a standard 8.5″ x 11″ sheet with 10 lines per sheet, and always print more than you think you need. Name and zip code are the minimum needed to verify constituent status, so make sure those fields are clearly labeled.

Two sample petition sheets are included in the appendix of this document: a “green” version for members of Congress who seem likely to support the Scientific Integrity Act, and a “gold” version for those who appear neutral or opposed.

Where to Collect Signatures

Think strategically about where people gather and where you’ll have time for a real conversation, not just a quick sign-and-go.

- In your professional world: lab groups, department seminars, conferences, university campuses, and medical or public health settings
- In your community: farmers markets, community fairs, public libraries, faith communities (get permission first), and school or PTA events
- Through allied organizations: local environmental, public health, or education groups already engaged on related Science Rising issues

Know Your Member of Congress

Before you head out, do a little homework.

- Has your representative cosponsored the Scientific Integrity Act or related legislation?
- Where do they stand on science funding and evidence-based policy?

Knowing their track record helps you tailor your conversations so you can walk into any interaction with confidence.

Start with the representative's official congressional website for sponsored and cosponsored legislation, and use Congress.gov for broader bill tracking and voting history. This step also determines which version of the petition sheets to use: if your congressperson is already a cosponsor, your ask should include thanking them and pressing for active recruitment of colleagues. If they haven't signaled support, the ask shifts to making the case for why they should.

4. A Few Things to Know Before You Start

When seeking signatures, several questions come up often, so it's worth preparing your answers beforehand so you can address these questions confidently in the field.

On Privacy

Signers sometimes ask what happens to their information. Petition sheets are delivered directly to your member of Congress's district office, and neither UCS nor any third party will have access to the names, zip codes, or emails collected. Be transparent about this when you ask people to sign. It builds trust and makes the ask easier.

On Lobbying

Some volunteers wonder whether collecting signatures and delivering a petition on federal legislation will make them a lobbyist. So long as they are acting in a volunteer capacity, and without compensation, it will not. Federal lobbying registration requirements do not apply to volunteers. If you have specific concerns about your situation, consult a legal resource or reach out to your Science Network coordinator at sciencenetwork@ucs.org.

And a Note about Personal Safety

Use common sense when collecting in public or unfamiliar settings. A few guidelines: work with a buddy when tabling or canvassing, stick to venues and neighborhoods you know, let someone know your plans and expected return time, and trust your instincts. If a situation feels uncomfortable, it's okay to wrap up and leave. Your safety comes first.

5. Collect Signatures Through Relationships

The most effective petition appeal comes with a conversation. You don't need to be a trained canvasser; you're a constituent with a story, and that matters more than any script. A signer who understands *why* they signed is infinitely more valuable than one who doesn't.

Lead with Your Personal "Why"

Before asking anyone to sign, share briefly why you care. What's at stake in your own work or community? Personal connection is far more persuasive than facts alone, even coming from a scientist.

Keep the Ask Simple

You don't need to explain the full policy history. A sentence or two about what's at stake and what you're asking the congressperson to do is enough. Connect Science Rising themes, threats to scientific integrity, funding cuts, and evidence-based policy to things that are tangible and local.

Build Trust

If someone asks something you don't know, it's fine to be honest. "I don't know that, but here's what I do know" is a credible response. And be transparent about why you're collecting contact information: name and zip code are needed to verify constituent status, and an email address can keep signers connected to the campaign beyond the petition.

6. Use Peer-to-Peer Recruitment to Expand Your Reach

You don't have to collect every signature yourself; one of the most powerful things you can do is ask people in your network to collect from theirs. Fellow scientists, graduate students, colleagues, neighbors, and anyone who's attended a Science Rising event are all good candidates. Before they begin, set them up with printed petition sheets, a clipboard, talking points, and a clear deadline. A 10-minute conversation about the issue and the ask will go a long way toward making them feel confident.

Who Might Volunteer

- Fellow scientists or colleagues who are already interested in the issue
- Graduate students, postdocs, or lab members looking for ways to engage in advocacy
- Friends, neighbors, or community members who have expressed concern about related issues
- People who have attended previous Science Network or Science Rising events

Make It Easy

- The lower the barrier, the more likely people are to follow through. Offer a digital petition link they can share by text or email, a ready-made social media post, or a simple ask: "Can you bring this to your next department meeting?" And send a friendly reminder a few days before your deadline—most people want to help, they just need a nudge.
- Scripts for different petitioning scenarios can be found below.

7. Plan a Creative and Effective Delivery of the Signed Petition

Dropping a petition in the mail is fine. Delivering it in person, with the people who collected it standing in the room, is far more memorable and far more likely to open an ongoing relationship with a congressperson's office.

August Recess: Your Primary Window

Members of Congress return to their home districts every August for three to four weeks, which is one of the best opportunities for in-person constituent engagement. District offices are more accessible, congresspeople are attending local events and town halls, and community visibility is high. Start planning at least four to six weeks in advance.

How to Request a District Office Meeting

Reach out to your representative's district office two to three weeks before your target delivery date. Here is how:

- Call or email the district office directly; contact information is available on the congressperson's official website
- Introduce yourself as a constituent and a scientist, if applicable
- Mention that you will be presenting a community petition with signatures from district constituents
- Ask for 15 to 20 minutes with the congressperson or a relevant policy staffer
- Be flexible on timing; staffers will appreciate your willingness to work around their schedules
- See the scripts for requesting a meeting below

Who to Bring with You

Invite the people who helped gather signatures and aim for diversity in career stages, disciplines, and community roles. Four or five people with distinct perspectives can make the visit feel like a community, not just a lobby day.

One of the most effective approaches to petition delivery is the **Generations of Science model:** bringing together scientist-advocates across career stages, disciplines, and lived experiences to demonstrate that concern about scientific integrity spans generations, communities, and even families.

Imagine walking into a congressional office with a graduate student, a retired professor, a practicing physician, and a high school science teacher, all constituents, all holding petition sheets they personally collected. Or picture a father and daughter, both scientists, standing side by side: one who built a career under the protections this legislation would codify, and one just beginning hers. Maybe it's a grandfather who spent decades in research and his granddaughter who's deciding right now whether science is still a field worth entering.

That visual communicates something a stack of paper alone cannot: Scientific integrity isn't an abstract policy issue. It's a living legacy, passed down through mentorship, families, and generations of people who believed that evidence and truth matter. When constituents see scientists showing up not just as professionals but as parents, children, and neighbors, that's a community, not just a cause.

When planning your delegation, think about who in your local Science Network represents that range of perspectives. Who are the scientists at different stages of their careers? Who has community relationships that extend beyond the lab?

How to Structure the Delivery Visit

- Don't just hand over the sheets and leave.
- Have each attendee prepare a one- to two-minute personal statement about why they signed and what the issue means to their work or community. One person should lead with a brief overview of the petition and the ask.
- Present the signatures visually, in a bound stack or folder, with a total count.
- Close by asking for something specific: "Will Rep. [Name] commit to cosponsoring?" or "Can we follow up with your office about next steps?"
- See the scripts below for additional language.

Pair the Delivery with a Public Moment

Consider timing your delivery alongside a broader public action, such as a Science Rising table at a farmers market, a short statement to local media, or a gathering of Science Network members outside the district office. Public moments amplify your delivery and give supporters a way to participate beyond signing.

8. Follow Up and Keep People Engaged

The petition delivery is not the end, it is a door opener. What you do in the days and weeks after determines whether this is just a one-time action or the beginning of an ongoing advocacy relationship.

Immediate Follow-Up

Within 48 hours, send a thank-you note to the staffer or your representative's office reiterating your ask and offering to be a scientific resource going forward. Share a brief recap with your signers and collectors that covers how many signatures you presented, what the response was, and report back to your Science Network coordinator (sciencenetwork@ucs.org) so UCS can track engagement as part of the broader Science Rising campaign.

Long-Term Relationship-Building

The signers and collectors you worked with are now part of your local science advocacy network. Stay in touch:

- Share updates with them when your representative's office responds or when there are developments on the issue.
- Invite them to future Science Rising actions, meetings, letters, calls, and public events.

- Look for ways to deepen their involvement based on their interests and availability.
- Your Science Network coordinator can help you track responses and connect your local effort to the national strategy—you don't have to navigate the follow-up alone.

The Ladder of Engagement

People who sign a petition are one step up a ladder of engagement. With the right follow-up, today's signer becomes tomorrow's meeting attendee, letter writer, or fellow organizer. Think of your petition effort as building the base of a local Science Rising community, not just completing a one-time action.

Petitioning Action Hour

Learn how to collect and deliver petition signatures that turn community support into direct pressure on your member of Congress during the August recess. For more details and to sign up, go to the congressional toolkit webpage.

Scientific Integrity Act Petitioning Scripts

These are guides, not to be followed word for word. Speak naturally and in your own voice; people respond to authenticity.

1. Petition Ask

OPENING (tabling or on the street):

"Hi there! My name is [YOUR NAME] and I'm a volunteer with [YOUR ORG/the Union of Concerned Scientists]. Do you have just a minute? I'm collecting signatures on a petition calling on [REPRESENTATIVE'S NAME] to support the Scientific Integrity Act, a bill that would protect federal scientists from political interference."

OPENING (door to door):

"Hi, my name is [YOUR NAME], and I'm a volunteer in the neighborhood working with [YOUR ORG/the Union of Concerned Scientists]. We're gathering signatures on a petition to [REPRESENTATIVE'S NAME] about protecting the independence of federal scientists—things like making sure the government can't bury public health reports. Would you be open to hearing a little more about it?"

SHORT HOOK (if they need more):

"Basically, right now the government can suppress or alter scientific findings, like delaying reports on bird flu outbreaks or blocking studies on vaccine safety. This bill would make that illegal. It's pretty straightforward, and it has broad support."

THE ASK:

"Would you be willing to sign our petition? We'll be delivering these signatures directly to [REPRESENTATIVE'S NAME]'s office during the August recess to show them how many people in [STATE/DISTRICT] care about this."

AFTER THEY SIGN:

"Thank you so much, it really makes a difference. If you'd like to stay in the loop or get more involved, feel free to write your email in that column and we'll keep you posted on how the delivery goes."

IF THEY HESITATE:

"Totally fair, this isn't about any political party, it's really just about making sure scientists can do their jobs without being censored or pressured. Even if you don't follow the news on this

closely, it affects things like your drinking water, air quality standards, and public health guidance. It's the kind of thing most people agree on once they hear about it."

2. Asking for an In-Office Visit via Phone Call

Lead with being a constituent, not a representative of a specific organization. District staff are most responsive to local voices.

OPENING:

"Hi, my name is [YOUR NAME] and I'm a constituent calling from [CITY/ZIP]. I'm also a volunteer with [YOUR ORG/the Union of Concerned Scientists], and I'm hoping to schedule a brief meeting with [REPRESENTATIVE'S NAME] or a member of their staff during the August recess to deliver a constituent petition and discuss the Scientific Integrity Act."

IF YOU'RE ASKED WHAT IT'S ABOUT:

"We'll be delivering signatures from constituents in [STATE/DISTRICT] who are calling on [REPRESENTATIVE'S NAME] to sponsor or cosponsor the Scientific Integrity Act, a bill introduced by Senator Schatz in the Senate and Representative Tonko in the House that would protect federal scientists from political interference. We'd love 15 to 20 minutes to present the petition and hear where [REPRESENTATIVE'S NAME] stands on the issue."

THE ASK:

"We're flexible on timing during the recess period, roughly [DATE RANGE]. Would it be possible to find a 15 to 20 minute slot, either in person at the district office or by phone if that works better? I can also follow up with an email if that's easier for your scheduling."

CLOSING:

"Wonderful, thank you so much. Could I get the best email address to send a confirmation and any materials? And is there a specific staff member who handles science or health policy I should address it to? I really appreciate your help."

3. Asking for an In-Office Visit via Email

SUBJECT LINE:

Constituent Meeting Request: Scientific Integrity Act Petition Delivery—[YOUR NAME], [CITY/ZIP]

BODY:

Dear [REPRESENTATIVE'S NAME]'s Office,

My name is [YOUR NAME], and I am a constituent from [CITY, STATE, ZIP]. I am also a volunteer with [YOUR ORG/the Union of Concerned Scientists].

I am writing to request a brief meeting (15 to 20 minutes) with [REPRESENTATIVE'S NAME] or a member of their staff during the August congressional recess. We would like to deliver a constituent petition calling on [REPRESENTATIVE'S NAME] to sponsor or cosponsor the Scientific Integrity Act, legislation introduced by Senator Schatz in the Senate and Representative Tonko in the House that would establish enforceable protections against political interference in federal science.

Since the start of the current administration, there have been more than 570 documented attacks on science, including suppression of bird flu reports, blocked vaccine safety studies, and the elimination of key intelligence analysis teams. The Scientific Integrity Act would help ensure that federal science remains accountable to the public, not to political pressure.

We are available anytime during [DATE RANGE] and are happy to meet in person at the district office or by phone. Please feel free to reply to this email or reach me at [YOUR PHONE NUMBER].

Thank you for your time and your service to [STATE/DISTRICT].

Warm regards,

[YOUR NAME]

[YOUR ADDRESS / CITY, ZIP]

[YOUR EMAIL]

[YOUR PHONE]

4. Petition Delivery

This is an in-person meeting at your representative's office. Arrive a few minutes early. Bring printed petitions, a one-page fact sheet about the issue, and your contact info. Know your personal story before you walk in.

OPENING:

"Thank you so much for making time for us today. My name is [YOUR NAME], and I'm here representing [YOUR ORG/the Union of Concerned Scientists] along with fellow constituents from [STATE/DISTRICT]. We're here today to deliver a constituent petition calling on [REPRESENTATIVE'S NAME] to sponsor or cosponsor the Scientific Integrity Act."

PRESENTING THE PETITION:

"This petition was collected by volunteers across [STATE/DISTRICT], and it represents [NUMBER] constituents who want their representative to know that protecting federal science matters to this community. [HAND OVER THE PETITION.] Every person who signed this lives or works in [STATE/DISTRICT], and they all share a concern: that political interference in science has real consequences for our health, our environment, and our safety."

THE STAKES:

"Since the start of this administration, there have been more than 570 documented attacks on science: things like delaying CDC reports on bird flu, suppressing studies on vaccine safety, and disbanding the intelligence team responsible for the Global Trends report. About a third of these are potential scientific integrity violations. These aren't abstract policy concerns—they affect what doctors know, what regulators can enforce, and what the public is told."

THE ASK:

"The Scientific Integrity Act, introduced by Senator Schatz in the Senate and Representative Tonko in the House, would codify enforceable protections against this kind of censorship and manipulation at the federal level. We're asking [REPRESENTATIVE'S NAME] to cosponsor this bill."

IF THEY'RE ALREADY A COSPONSOR:

"And since [REPRESENTATIVE'S NAME] has already cosponsored, thank you. We're asking them to go further and actively recruit colleagues to join, because this bill needs momentum to pass."

YOUR PERSONAL STORY (OPTIONAL):

"I want to share briefly why this matters to me personally. . . ."

Explain why you got involved, what connects you to science or to this issue in your community. Keep it to two or three sentences. Be specific and genuine.

IF THEY'RE UNCOMMITTED:

"We understand this is one of many priorities, and we appreciate that. What we'd like to leave with today is a commitment to a follow-up conversation, and a clear sense that the people of [STATE/DISTRICT] are paying attention. Can we ask: What would it take for [REPRESENTATIVE'S NAME] to get to yes on this bill?"

CLOSING:

"Thank you again for your time and for receiving this petition. We'll follow up in writing with additional information, including materials from the Union of Concerned Scientists. We hope [REPRESENTATIVE'S NAME] will stand with the scientists and constituents of [STATE/DISTRICT] on this. We're grateful for everything their office does, and we'll be in touch."

WHAT YOU SHOULD LEAVE BEHIND

- The signed petition (all sheets)
- A fact sheet on the Scientific Integrity Act (UCS materials)
- Your contact information and the best way to follow up

Follow up within 48 hours with a thank-you email and any materials you promised.

Petitioning Checklist

Before You Collect Signatures

- ☐ Confirm your Science Rising ask with your Science Network coordinator (sciencenetwork@ucs.org)
- ☐ Draft and print your petition sheet with all required fields
- ☐ Gather supplies: clipboards, pens, folder, talking points
- ☐ Identify your target venues and people

While Collecting

- ☐ Lead every conversation with your personal "why"
- ☐ Keep the ask simple and specific
- ☐ Recruit peer-to-peer collectors from your network
- ☐ Follow up with new collectors before the deadline

Planning to Deliver the Petition

- ☐ Contact the district office two to three weeks in advance
- ☐ Recruit a diverse delegation of signers and collectors
- ☐ Prepare brief personal statements for each attendee
- ☐ Consider pairing with a public-facing moment

After the Delivery

- ☐ Send a thank-you note to the office within 48 hours
- ☐ Share a recap with your signers and collectors
- ☐ Report back to your Science Network coordinator
- ☐ Stay in touch and invite people to the next action

Using Social Media

General Social Media Tips

1. Think about your audience: Is it mostly friends and family? People in your networks who share similar interests? Pick one or two people to keep in mind as you craft your posts.

2. Know your social media platform: Think about character limits, how links show up, what type of content generally does best (shorter, longer, personal stories, links to resources, etc.).

    - Bluesky: good for information sharing, insights based on your experience, sharing links. Character limit of 300 per post (though you can create a thread for longer content).

    - Facebook: good for memes and link-based posts. No meaningful character limit, but best practice is to keep it to a couple sentences.

    - Instagram: good for short-form videos, photos, images. Character limit of 2,200 per caption (but significantly shorter, with hashtags, is better).

    - LinkedIn: good for links, opinion-based posts on trends related to the workforce or insights based on your experience. Character limit of 3,000 per post.

    - X: good for links and information sharing. Character limit for X Free users of 280 per post (though you can create a thread for longer content).

3. Think about your post as planting seeds. You're never going to change someone's mind with a single social media post. That's not the goal. The goal is for someone to read your post, pause, and remember your post the next time they hear about a similar issue.

Messaging Tips

1. Choose your message. Some options for how to think about your series of posts:

    - Cover different issue areas that relate to the messaging guidance provided in the policy section above or other topics related to defending science. Highlight how what's happening at the federal level will have an impact on people's daily lives.

    - Pick one issue and go deep. Share different resources or types of content related to the same issue (personal stories, news articles, data, analysis, etc.).

    - Use data, but contextualize them. What's the story these data are telling? Don't just share numbers; make it clear why they matter.

- Look for news hooks that can draw people in, and connect these with impacts on your area or the long-term impacts people can expect to see.

- Remember your audience. Who are you trying to reach, and why should they care?

2. Think about what "supporting elements" you want to include in your post. Links to supplemental resources are great, like blog posts and trackers from reputable sources. But you could also include personal photos of your field research, the communities you serve, the students you work with, etc.

Tagging

1. Tag your audience—followers or connections who you want to take action—and invite them to share with their own networks.

2. Tag other Science Network members and science supporters you met during the Action Hour (see below), to help amplify each other's posts.

3. Tag UCS in your post on Bluesky or Instagram. We want to repost and share. (UCS is no longer active on X.)

    - Bluesky: @ucs.org

    - Instagram: @unionofconcernedscientists

4. Before posting, double-check your spelling and grammar.

Social Media Action Hour

Learn how to turn your social media into a tool for science advocacy by crafting posts and reaching out to your network in ways that build momentum during the August recess. For more details and to sign up, go to the congressional toolkit webpage.

Asking Questions at Town Halls

A town hall is a public meeting where elected officials meet with constituents to discuss key issues and answer questions. Town halls provide a rare opportunity for face-to-face engagement, allowing you to hold your representatives accountable in real time. Unlike emails or phone calls, which can be filtered through staff, town halls place direct pressure on lawmakers to respond publicly.

A critical tool in advocacy efforts, town halls create a space where elected officials must listen and respond directly to the concerns of their constituents. Town halls also serve as a barometer for public sentiment, allowing policymakers to gauge how strongly voters feel about particular issues.

Why Town Halls Matter

Public accountability: When members of Congress respond to questions in a public setting, their statements are on the record. This ensures transparency and allows advocates to track their commitments and hold them accountable later.

Media attention: Journalists often cover town halls, amplifying key issues. A well-posed question can generate media coverage, placing additional pressure on lawmakers to take action.

Constituent power: Seeing strong engagement from constituents can influence policy decisions and priorities. Lawmakers respond to the issues that their voters care about most, and visible advocacy at town halls can shape their legislative agenda.

Direct engagement: Town halls are a chance to express concerns about the Trump administration's policies and demand action. Public confrontation forces members of Congress to clarify their positions and, if necessary, reconsider their stance in response to voter pressure.

How to Find Upcoming Town Halls

- **Check official websites:** Visit your representative's and senators' official websites for event listings.
- **Subscribe to newsletters:** Sign up for email updates from your representative's and senators' offices.
- **Call congressional offices:** Directly ask staff if any town halls are planned.
- **Follow social media:** Check BlueSky, Facebook, X, and other platforms for announcements.
- **Check your local news:** Town halls are often announced through local media.
- **Check with organizations mobilizing in support of democracy:** Indivisible and similar organizations often organize and track town halls.

How to Engage at a Town Hall

Before the Event

- **Prepare your question:** Keep your questions concise, fact-based, and direct. Avoid long-winded setups, and get straight to the point with a question that demands a clear answer.
- **Recruit others:** If multiple people ask about the same issue, it signals broad concern and makes it harder for the elected official to dismiss.
- **Practice:** Rehearse your question to ensure clarity and confidence. Try role-playing with a friend or recording yourself to refine your delivery.
- **Research the format:** Town halls vary; some take live questions, while others require written submissions. Understanding the format ahead of time will help you prepare.

At the Event

- **Arrive early:** Secure a visible spot near the front where the member of Congress and media can see and hear you.
- **Sign up to ask a question:** If the format allows, register early to increase your chances of being called on.
- **Stay focused and confident:** Speak loudly and clearly. If your question is dodged, politely but firmly ask for a direct response.
- **Record the response:** Capture video/audio (if allowed) and take notes. This ensures accountability and provides documentation for the media and/or follow-up actions.

After the Event

- **Report back:** Tell UCS how it went! Provide notes, videos, or any key takeaways. You can email staff you've been in contact with or fill out this short form.
- **Post on social media:** Amplify the event, especially how the member of Congress addressed science-related topics, by posting quotes, videos, or summaries. Don't forget to tag the elected official. Check their website for their social media handles.
    - Example: *I just asked @Rep/Senator X about Y topic at today's town hall in [town/state]. They responded by saying ____. I applaud Rep/Senator X for standing up for science OR I was disappointed in Rep/Senator X for not committing to protecting science-informed policies.* (Include a quote and/or photos if you have them.)
- **Follow up:** Contact the representative's or senator's office to request further action. A well-documented exchange can be used to hold them accountable for future decisions.

Town Hall Action Hour

Get trained to show up and speak out at your member of Congress's town hall, turning up the volume on science during the August recess. For more details and to sign up, go to the congressional toolkit webpage.

The One Question You Should Ask Your Elected Representative on Each Policy Priority

Now that you have learned about effective ways of contacting your elected representatives and urging them to support key policies that would protect science and the planet, you are ready to reach out to them during this year's August recess.

Below we offer one question to ask your representative for each of the policy priorities described above, which you can use verbatim or adapt to suit your own voice at a town hall, on social media, or in delivering a petition.

Whenever possible, it is always helpful to personalize a comment before you pose a question to your elected representative. How do these issues affect you, your family, or your community?

1. Support the Scientific Integrity Act

"Do you commit to supporting the bipartisan Scientific Integrity Act (S. 4545, H.R. 1106), which would help prevent future presidents from censoring or manipulating federal science?"

2. Fund the Agencies That Protect Us from Climate-Driven Extreme Weather

"Will you vote to reject proposed cuts to funding and staffing at FEMA and NOAA and, instead, support increased funding for these critical agencies that protect us during Danger Season?"

3. Oppose Immunity for Big Oil

"Do you commit to voting against immunity for fossil fuel corporations (S. 4340, H.R. 8330) if this bill moves through a committee on which you serve or if it reaches the full House/Senate?"

4. Tackle the Energy Affordability Crisis Head-On

"Will you publicly call on the Trump administration to stop undermining the deployment of renewable energy projects?"

Additional Resources

- August 2026 recess toolkit landing page
- UCS Attacks on Science Tracker
- The Cost of Cutting American Science, from the Partnership for Public Service
- Scientists Must Act: Five Ways You Can Stand Up to Authoritarianism Today
- ScienceRising.org

Appendix: Scientific Integrity Act Petition Sheets

On the pages that follow are two petitions to customize and print:

1. **"Green" version:** for members of Congress who seem likely to support the Scientific Integrity Act
2. **"Gold" version:** for members of Congress who appear neutral or opposed to the Scientific Integrity Act

PETITION: Support the Scientific Integrity Act

PETITION COLLECTOR INFORMATION

Member of Congress:

_____

Collecting Organization / Individual:

_____

State / District:

_____

Collection Date & City:

_____

Why the Scientific Integrity Act Matters

Federal scientists protect our health, safety, and environment, but political interference puts that work at risk. Since the start of the current administration, there have been more than 570 documented attacks on science, including censorship of federal scientists, suppression of public health data, and disbanding of expert advisory committees. Approximately one-third of these are potential scientific integrity violations.

Recent examples of what's at stake:

- The administration delayed a CDC report on how bird flu was spreading across the country.
- The Office of the Director of National Intelligence eliminated the team publishing the Global Trends report, blocking critical long-range intelligence.
- Multiple studies on the safety of COVID and shingles vaccines were suppressed as part of a broader pattern of scientific disinformation.

The Scientific Integrity Act would codify enforceable protections against censorship, manipulation, and politically motivated findings, ensuring federal science stays accountable to the public, not to pressure from political appointees.

Petition Statement

*We, the undersigned residents of **[State/District]**, call on **[Representative/Senator Name]** to sponsor or cosponsor the Scientific Integrity Act, and if you have already done so, we thank you and urge you to go further.*

To those who have not yet signed on: Our community is counting on you. The attacks on federal science are real, ongoing, and harmful. We need you to stand with us by cosponsoring this bill without delay.

To those who have already cosponsored: Thank you. Your leadership reflects the values of the people you represent. Now we ask you to use that leadership, reach across the aisle, bring your colleagues on board, and help get this bill across the finish line.

*Science is not partisan. The people of **[State/District]** are watching, and we are grateful for every step you take to protect it.*

Signatures

#	Full Name (Print)	Signature	Email Address	Zip Code	Date / City
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
7.					
8.					
9.					
10.					
11.					
12.					
13.					
14.					
15.					
16.					
17.					

Additional sheets may be attached. Collected by: _____

PETITION: Demand Support for the Scientific Integrity Act

PETITION COLLECTOR INFORMATION

Member of Congress: _____

Collecting Organization / Individual: _____

State / District: _____

Collection Date & City: _____

Why the Scientific Integrity Act Matters

Federal scientists protect our health, safety, and environment, but political interference puts that work at risk. Since the start of the current administration, there have been more than 570 documented attacks on science, including censorship of federal scientists, suppression of public health data, and disbanding of expert advisory committees. Approximately one-third of these are potential scientific integrity violations.

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The Scientific Integrity Act would codify enforceable protections against censorship, manipulation, and politically motivated findings, ensuring federal science stays accountable to the public, not to pressure from political appointees.

Petition Statement

*We, the undersigned residents of **[State/District]**, call on **[Representative/Senator Name]** to immediately sponsor or cosponsor the Scientific Integrity Act.*

Our communities cannot wait—we deserve decisions based on independent science. From bird flu to vaccine safety to long-term intelligence assessments, political interference in science has real consequences for real people. We need our representative to stand on the right side of this issue. We are watching. We will remember. And we urge you to act now.

Signatures

#	Full Name (Print)	Signature	Email Address	Zip Code	Date / City
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
7.					
8.					
9.					
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11.					
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17.					

Additional sheets may be attached. Collected by: _____