



# LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY TOOLKIT



MERCY FOR  
ANIMALS

# Be a Voice for Animals

Mercy For Animals' mission is to construct a compassionate food system by reducing suffering and ending the exploitation of animals for food. Through legislative advocacy, you can be a voice for the animals and influence policymakers and their vote to shape the future of our planet and all who share it.

This toolkit is intended to give you the skills you need to approach policymakers and encourage them to support policies that benefit animals and oppose ones that harm or exploit them.

## Table of Contents

Why be an advocate for animals?	2
How to be an effective advocate for animals in the policy space	3
Get started with these actions	4
Tips for meeting face to face with an elected official	5
Finding your local and national elected officials	6
Additional tips and resources	7



## Why be an advocate for animals?

Public participation in the creation of laws and policies matters—it is an essential function of good governance and enhances our ability to support community values through regulations. Advocates help government officials understand the desires of constituents (the residents who elect lawmakers).

Through interactive political advocacy, you have the power to elect politicians that have animal-friendly values. These politicians may also influence the opinions of other public officials who impact laws affecting farmed animals.

Advocacy efforts may include meeting with decision-makers face to face but can also be as simple as sending a letter or an email to your representative that lets them know you support policies that protect farmed animals.

**Your efforts show lawmakers that you and other constituents do not want to see animals exploited for food.**

Our actions today determine the shape of our collective future. Together, we can work to influence policies that reduce animal suffering and create a more compassionate food system. **Together, we are an unrelenting force for animals and our planet.**

## How to be an effective advocate for animals in the policy space

One of the most important aspects of being an advocate is to be well informed. Mercy For Animals provides information on issues involving farmed animals across our digital platforms. Remember, a local representative may look to you as a knowledgeable and credible source of information; study the resources available on the Mercy For Animals website so that you can be ready to answer their questions, although additional individual research may have a greater impact when you're answering questions and speaking in front of people.

Here are a few tips for getting started:

- ◇ Work with other volunteers and in groups to present a powerful and unified front when approaching elected officials.
- ◇ Let previous legislative successes for animals and social media campaigns from nearby communities guide your expectations of what is possible in your own community.
- ◇ Attend open council meetings to become familiar with how they function in your local area.
- ◇ Always try to keep communication with the support staff of elected officials brief and professional.
- ◇ Remember to thank those who assist you for their time and help.
- ◇ Be prepared to make compromises—any step is a good step, even if it does not meet your ideal goal.
- ◇ Be patient AND persistent. Advocacy efforts may not create the full scale of change that you want right away. Celebrate milestones and keep moving forward.

## Get started with these actions

### Send a letter to an elected official

Sending a professional formal letter or email to your representatives brings attention to farmed animal issues that may not have been part of their policy agendas. Be sure to note that you are a voter in their voting district and are connected with other voters that share your values. Not sure of the names of your local elected officials? See [Finding your local and national elected officials](#) on page 6.

### Participate in a public comment period

During the rulemaking process of federal agencies, the public has the right to provide feedback through the “notice-and-comment” period. This time allows for any person or group to easily submit their thoughts on proposed rules online or in person. Proposed federal rules and comment forms are available at [federalregister.gov](https://www.federalregister.gov) and [regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov). See the template public comment below, and adjust it to meet your needs:

*To Whom It May Concern,*

*Thank you for the opportunity to comment on [Name of Initiative]. [1–2 sentences introducing yourself and your voting district].*

*I would like to [raise concerns / inform you of new information / provide supporting evidence] regarding [Name of Initiative]:*

*[1 sentence describing first major point]*

*[1 sentence describing second major point]*

*In summary, [1–2 sentences summarizing your comment]. Thank you for considering my comment.*

*Sincerely,  
[Name]*

### Attend a town hall or city council meeting

Attending local town hall or city council meetings is another great way to get the attention of your representatives. Bringing up topics at town hall or city council meetings increases public awareness of them. You can advocate for animals by adding farmed animal protection to the meeting agenda and arranging individual meetings with representatives for follow-up.

## Tips for meeting face to face with an elected official

- ◇ Schedule an appointment by contacting a legislator’s office via phone or email.
- ◇ Identify yourself as a concerned citizen and voter in their region.
- ◇ Dress professionally for in-person meetings and arrive ahead of time.
- ◇ Prepare to be concise—most meetings are short, typically around 15 minutes.
- ◇ Support your argument with facts. (Remember to access our resources and check your sources for any research you do on your own.)
- ◇ Explain how your goals will positively affect you and other constituents in their voting district.
- ◇ Understand opposing arguments and be prepared to address them.
- ◇ Make a clear call to action—for example, “Please, vote no on I-345.”
- ◇ Follow up with a personal thank-you note to let them know you appreciated their time and consideration of the issues that are important to you.
- ◇ Prepare a concise and easy-to-read one pager discussing your issue to leave with the elected official after your meeting. (Policymakers often respond well to large infographics and minimal text.)

### **Use your volunteer power!**

Legislators often prefer to receive feedback from those who may actually vote for them rather than professional lobbyists.



## Finding your local and national elected officials

### ◇ Municipal (city or town)

- A government contained in an individual city or town is the lowest level of local government in the United States. Municipal governments involve a resident-elected city council and a mayor.
- Municipal elected officials are the most accessible for advocacy due to their location and dedication to serving local interests.

### ◇ County

- County governments are the next tier of local government, made up of citizen-elected county representatives who meet and organize county affairs.
- Each state consists of a number of counties, which in turn consist of a number of towns and cities.
- Some county governments are responsible for imposing taxes on citizens and organizing public education.

### ◇ State

- Each U.S. state has its own government responsible for affairs within the state's borders. A state government has its own senate and house of representatives elected by citizens of the state. Each state's governor is also elected by the citizens.
- States are in charge of constructing and maintaining roads, levying income taxes, and overseeing welfare programs. Additionally, states retain all rights not granted to the federal government under the United States Constitution.
- State elected officials may be less accessible than municipal and county, but they present opportunities for more widespread impact.

### ◇ Federal

- This is the highest level of government in the United States. Citizens of the United States elect their representatives in the legislature, which is made up of the House of Representatives and the Senate.
- The federal government has the power to regulate taxes, make currency, establish federal welfare programs, and enact laws in the interest of the nation as a whole.
- Advocacy at this level can have a widespread impact since federal regulations impact the entire country.

## Additional tips and resources

- [Review the voting records](#) of lawmakers in your region! Educate yourself about the values of your representatives and gain insight into how they may vote on policies that affect farmed animals. Voting records are free and easily accessible.
- Use social media to find like-minded advocates close to you. Remember: Working as a group can be very powerful!
  - Use the information and resources provided [here](#) for help.
- Share news articles about policy improvements to farmed animal welfare, as they are known to [lessen people's interest in eating animal products](#).
- Refrain from sharing farmed animal cruelty videos, as they are known to generate [both positive and negative responses](#) and may not be the most effective tools.
- Unless you have discussed a formal collaboration or specific project with a Mercy For Animals staff member, do not state that you are lobbying for Mercy For Animals or present yourself as a Mercy For Animals representative or volunteer.

When reviewing voting records, look for the elected officials that do not vote along the lines of big agriculture and industry!

**Join forces with other advocates:** Reach out to our organizing team to get connected with other individuals or groups that are doing this vital work in your area. Email us at [Organizing@MercyForAnimals.org](mailto:Organizing@MercyForAnimals.org) today.

