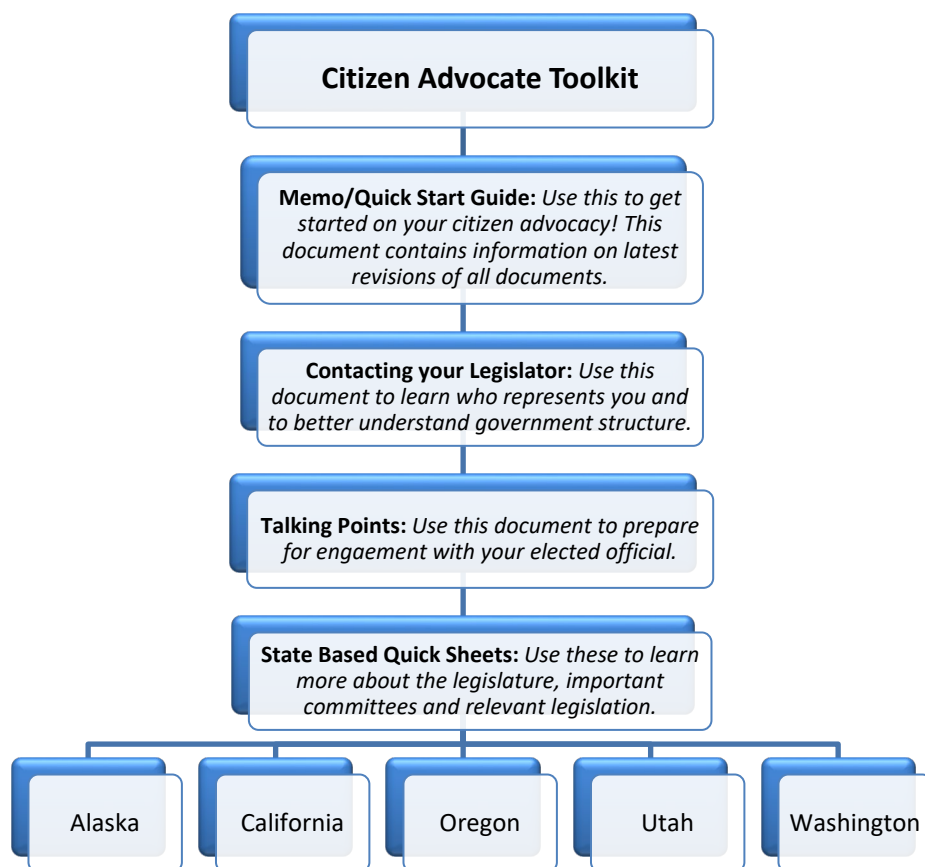


Memorandum on the Earthquake Engineering Research Institute's Citizen Advocacy Toolkit| Quick Start Guide

EERI's involvement in public policy stems from its mission statement: to reduce earthquake risk in part by advocating comprehensive and realistic measures for reducing the harmful effects of earthquakes. One way EERI fulfills this role is by forging consensus and speaking with a common voice to public forums and legislative bodies on behalf of the diverse risk management community. In order to successfully affect public policy, EERI needs active participation from its members to help (1) identify and study important earthquake-related problems, (2) evaluate potential solutions to determine the most appropriate one(s), and (3) support policymakers in advocating and implementing the chosen solution(s). The resulting policies have the power to not only shape our communities and affect our quality of living, but also influence the very future of our profession.

To support our members, EERI has developed a toolkit to enable members to become effective and engaged *Citizen Advocates* on seismic safety, which currently includes the following pieces. Visit EERI's [Legislative Action Center](#) for below and additional documents.



Document revised November 2, 2020

Note: State Based Quick Sheets not included in this Toolkit document.

Find Your Legislators

Over 80,000 government bodies operate in the United States. Understanding who represents your interests, and how, can help you impact policy decisions at different levels of government.

HOW ARE YOU GOVERNED?

The system of Checks and Balances divides our government systems into three main branches:

<i>Government Branches</i>	<i>Functions</i>
Legislative	Create and change laws based on expert opinion, interest group advocacy, and voter input
Executive	Enforce laws through rulemaking and regulation
Judicial	Interpret laws and their implementation

THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH AT DIFFERENT GOVERNMENT LEVELS

	U.S. CONGRESS	
	<i>House of Representatives</i>	<i>Senate</i>
FEDERAL	435 Members <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2-year term - Districts within states assigned by population 	100 Members <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 6-year term - 2 Senators for every state
STATE	<i>State Legislatures</i>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Generally two chambers with electoral districts assigned by population - Full or part-time positions (see state quick sheets for details) 	
LOCAL	<i>County and Municipal Governments</i>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Elected from districts or at-large - Full or part-time position 	

With knowledge of government representation levels, the next crucial step to affect change is to know WHO is representing you at each level. Many resources enable you to find out who represents you at which levels, and how they vote on various legislative issues.

HOW DO YOU FIND YOUR REPRESENTATIVES?

- Identify your federal, state, and local elected officials based on your address: www.commoncause.org/find-your-representative
- Find U.S. Senators by state with this interactive map: <http://www.senate.gov/states/>
- Find your U.S. Representative by ZIP code: <https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>
- Find your state and local government websites using this database:
 - State: <https://www.usa.gov/states-and-territories>
 - Local: <https://www.usa.gov/local-governments>

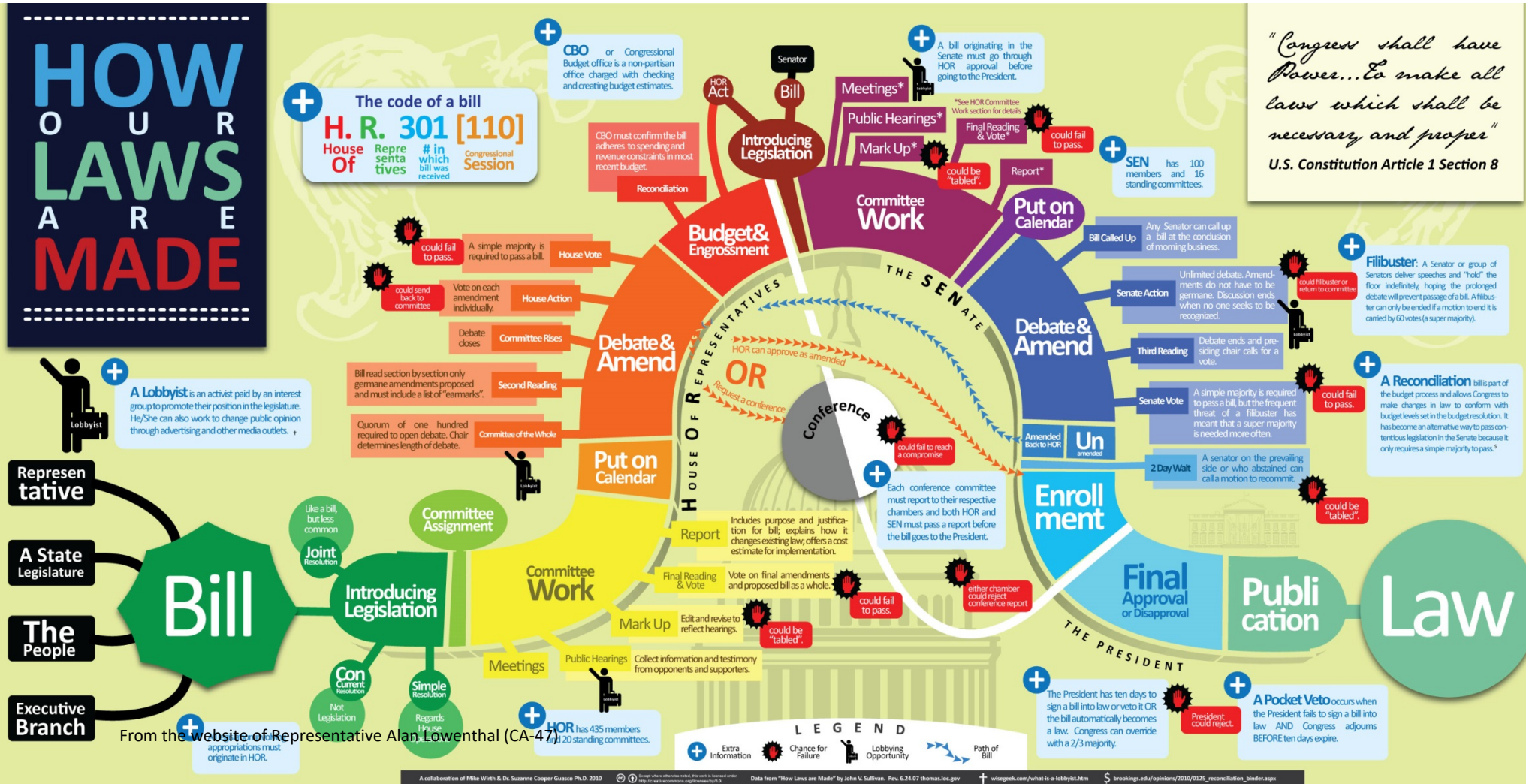
HOW DO YOUR REPRESENTATIVES VOTE?

Finding your representatives' voting records may vary in difficulty. The most direct way at any level is to call the legislator of interest's office once you identify them.

Another method is to track legislation within the seismic/earthquake scope. You can then view pertinent items of legislation and examine how legislators voted on them.

- At the federal level you can use <https://www.congress.gov>
- At the state level using the legislative website (generally separate from regular state government websites)
- Depending on the structure of your municipal government, at the local level it is advisable to ask your representative the best way to track their record

Bill tracking by key words and signing up for notifications will help you remain informed about pending legislation of interest, enabling you to more fully advocate as an EERI Citizen Advocate.



Guide to Speaking with your Elected Representative

When meeting with your elected official, come prepared with talking points to convey your message in the most direct manner possible. Be constructive, supportive and eager to be an expert liaison to seismic safety policy.

Complete the Preparation Worksheet

Point 1:

Reason

Evidence/Explanation

Specific Ask or Action/Repeat Point 1

Additional Notes for Yourself:

Remember:

- The above messaging should take you no more than 10-15 seconds to deliver.
- As much as possible, refer to [policy statements](#) on the EERI Legislative Action Center (briefs on page 2).
 - o If you depart from any recommendations in the policy statements, be sure you clarify you are speaking on behalf of yourself as a professional and not on behalf of EERI.
- Print 1-page policy statements (2x recommended) and leave with your representative/Legislative aid
- Bring several business cards and be sure to deliver to the legislative aid you may be in touch with as well as your representative.
- Practice BEFORE you meet with your representative. Be clear, calm and think bigger picture (e.g., explaining return periods is not the way you convince a representative of the threat of earthquake risks in our region).
- Get a photo of yourself with your legislator – it is important we document our advocacy!
- IMPORTANT: YOU MAY BE THE ONLY CONSTITUENT AS CONCERNED ABOUT SEISMIC SAFETY. Know that your voice needs to be heard and that your objective is to continue building relationships with your legislator so you can become a key expert contact.

Adapted from SCEC Media Guide

About EERI

What We Do: EERI supports individuals, communities and organizations with a common interest in reducing earthquake risk, and advocates for comprehensive and realistic measures for reducing the harmful effects of earthquakes.

Who We Are: EERI is an international, nonprofit technical society of experts dedicated to reducing earthquake risk and is an internationally recognized authority on seismic engineering and safety for more than 70 years. We advocate for comprehensive and realistic measures for reducing the destructive effects of earthquakes. EERI membership includes professionals in a wide range of seismic safety-related scientific and design disciplines, including but not limited to architects, planners, social scientists, seismologists, structural engineers, geotechnical engineers, and public policy professionals.

EERI Policy Positions

[Implementing an Effective Earthquake Early Warning System](#): A comprehensive Earthquake Early Warning (EEW) system should be fully developed and deployed in areas of high earthquake risk in the United States. EEW can save lives and reduce property damage but requires an urgent, substantial and long-term commitment and investment in the scientific basis, physical infrastructure, information technology, delivery systems and user training to support its widest possible beneficial and equitable use.

[Promoting the Use of Confined Masonry Construction](#): International building code writing bodies, academic institutions, and international aid agencies should promote the use of confined masonry as an affordable, earthquake-resistant construction choice for emerging economies in seismically active regions around the world.

[Schools shall be URM Free by 2033](#): To keep students safe, school buildings must be “URM free by 2033” in regions with high and moderate earthquake hazard. To accomplish, programs need to be established to identify, prioritize and fund retrofit or replacement.

[Mitigation of Nonstructural Hazards in Schools](#): Students should be kept safe from injury from falling nonstructural items in school buildings in regions with high and moderate earthquake hazard. Establish programs to identify, prioritize, fund, and mitigate falling hazards to protect students, allow egress after the earthquake and speed repairs needed to reopen.

[Creating Earthquake-Resilient Communities](#): EERI advocates for all levels of government to develop community-driven earthquake resilience plans and strategies of action that address a community’s building stock and associated social, economic, environmental, and lifeline infrastructure systems and that would lead to more rapid and robust recovery from future earthquakes.

[National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program](#): Congress should monitor and insist on implementation of the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program (NEHRP) as modified by the 2018 reauthorization. Of primary importance are all of the tasks called for in the 2011 National

Research Council report on earthquake resilience. The President should request the needed funding, and Congress should provide the subsequent appropriation.

[Improve Reliability of Lifeline Infrastructure Systems](#): Programs to improve the reliability and resilience of lifeline infrastructure systems in earthquakes should identify the systems' vulnerabilities and interdependencies in earthquakes, prioritize mitigation actions, implement system improvements over time, and communicate system vulnerabilities to lifeline customers, other lifeline operators, and affected local, state, and federal governments.

[Promote Safe and Resilient Housing in the United States](#): Actions are needed to increase the safety and habitability of housing after earthquakes, recognizing that housing is architecturally diverse and serves a variety of household sizes and incomes. Residents should be able to "shelter-in-place," which is the ability of a resident to shelter in their home after an earthquake. This objective would be achieved if the housing is safe and habitable after the event during the repair phase to restore normal functionality. Policies should be enacted at all levels of government to define when residents can shelter-in-place and building codes and standards to increase quality seismic retrofits.

[Promoting the Adoption and Enforcement of Effective Building Codes with Earthquake Provisions in the United States](#): EERI supports federal, state, and local adoption, enforcement, and funding of modern, effective building codes with provisions for earthquake design for new and existing buildings in the United States. While the focus of this paper is on United States conditions and recommendations, EERI supports action worldwide. Incentives such as Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grants should be applied for by the State to establish a statewide building code if resources are limited to do so otherwise.

Actions You Can Take

Write a Letter to your Legislator

When writing a letter to your legislator, be sure to use your own words and keep your messaging clear and concise. Brevity is key – ideally 500 words or less. Be sure to make the letter PERSONAL and if using one of EERI's policy statements, discuss how this impacts YOU. Introduce yourself as a constituent by including your work or home address in the representative's district. When discussing your background, include a description of your line of work, expertise and your affiliation with EERI. When discussing specific legislation, use examples and talk about the affect such a (proposed) bill has on your life. Ideally, your subject line and/or first sentence will be your ASK – e.g. vote against or vote in support of bill XYZ. If you do not ask for anything directly, you will not get it!

Adapted from ASCE

Call your Legislator

A phone call to your legislator will demonstrate that you are deeply engaged and committed to your cause and may generate a faster response than email or letter. Here are a few things to keep in mind when calling your legislator:

Prior to the Call:

- Before the call, take time to gather thoughts and prepare what you would like to say. Preparation may include better understanding of the bill/concept you want to discuss, understanding what committee(s) your representative may sit on, listing out/reviewing key points on various policies (refer to our policy position statements) and a gaining clarity on legislative session schedule.
- **IMPORTANT:** You will rarely get to speak to your legislator over the phone. Most likely, you will speak with a legislative director. When you call the office, be sure to ask for the legislative aid/director who works on specific topics (you can name the bill, or if there is no bill under consideration, ask for who might be a science/technology legislative support for the representative).

During the Call:

- Expect to speak with a staff member, not your representative, and be prepared to provide your name, hometown and zip code. Always be polite in tone and language.
- Be concise and make your priorities clear. Explain why you are calling and what action you would like your legislator to take (e.g. support the reauthorization of NEHRP and that you would like your representative to support increased funding for federal programs on seismic safety).
- If leaving a message, be sure to state who you are and who you are representing, what bill you may be supporting or opposing and state reasons as to why. You can leave your name and contact with the staff member for a call back if requested. Representatives **DO** get our messages! If you do speak with an aid, be sure to note down their email as well.

After the Call:

- Consider additional actions you can take on the issue: social media with tagging, for example.
- Call back or email as a follow-up after a few days to restate concerns and views and ask whether the lawmaker has made any commitment to supporting your points.

In-Person Meeting with Your Legislator

A lobby visit is a meeting to tell your elected representative your views on a topic and for you to have your official takes action on that topic. You certainly do not have to meet in Washington D.C. as every representative also has a district office in your locale. There are permanent staff members at every office whom you can meet with. If you are in D.C., however, do try to take advantage and set up a meeting with your representative's Congressional office.

Requesting your meeting:

- Make your request in writing and follow up with a call to the appointment secretary
- Suggest specific times and dates for your meeting.
- Let the scheduler know what the issue and legislation you wish to discuss
- Make sure that they know you are a constituent

Preparing for your meeting:

- Decide who will go to the meeting. If several EERI members are in the same district, you may choose to go as a group, especially at the federal level. At the state and local levels, you may be able to set up a one-on-one meeting. Be sure to bring business cards.
- Agree on talking points and arrive ready with print outs of policy statements and relevant data for your region. Use the preparation sheet on page 1 to help you.
- Decide on what you want to achieve - state clearly bills you may support or oppose. Note again that if you are not aligning with EERI statements or regional chapter consensus, then you must state that you are representing yourself and not EERI.

During the meeting:

- Be prompt and patient. Show up earlier than your meeting time. Often, legislators may be running late so plan that into your schedule. Don't be surprised or deterred if you have to meet in the lobby or hall with a staffer.
- Keep it short and focused – you will have 20 minutes or less with a staff person, and as little as 10 minutes with your elected official. Make the most of that brief time by sticking to your topic and not engaging in too much small talk. DO NOT attempt to cover all positions but stick to 1 at most 2. STAY ON TOPIC!
- Provide local and personal examples on how particular legislation, action/inaction will affect you and other constituents.
- Do not be overly technical in your language.
- It is OK to say 'I do not know.' Do not give wrong or inaccurate information which can hurt your credibility and that of the Institute's.
- Be receptive of contrary opinions about your suggestions. Seek their thoughts on a middle ground position if possible.

After the meeting:

- Compare notes and follow up in a timely fashion with any requested materials and information that the staffer or elected official has requested. Report significant findings to the PPA.
- Be persistent and flexible with your asks – check in with the staff as follow-up especially close to specific legislative deadlines.
- Please update EERI (policy@eeri.org) on your discussions and provide any information that needs to be added to your state's page on the Legislative Action Center.

IMPORTANT: Before you visit in person or speak over phone:

- Know which committees your representative is a member of. *See Contacting your Legislator.*
- Know what previous legislation she/he has developed as related to seismic safety, emergency preparedness, and even climate change.
- Know who the correct legislative aid or director would be for earthquake seismic safety.
- Always come prepared with talking points (page 1), business cards, and handouts.

References: American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), University of California, American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology