

IMMIGRATION JUSTICE CAMPAIGN



Beyond Casework: Immigration Justice Campaign Toolkit for Using Your Voice to Affect Change

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GETTING STARTED

Thank you for volunteering with the Immigration Justice Campaign. For men and women held in civil immigration detention across the country (often in hard to reach locations), legal representation is vital to providing the best chance of success in their cases and the greatest opportunity to demand that they receive a fair day in court.

But your work doesn't end there. Every day, thousands of men and women face inhumane conditions within our immigration detention system – and a deportation process that belies any notion of fairness. Your voice is needed, now more than ever, to call out and demand an end to harmful policies. Your voice matters.

This guide is meant to help you apply your experience as an Immigration Justice Campaign volunteer to continue to work on behalf of detained immigrants *outside the courtroom*. Many of you are lawyers who have already stepped forward and represented immigrants in their legal

cases. Maybe you have participated in one of our many digital Take Action campaigns in the past. Or perhaps you are just learning about immigration detention and you're ready to get started.

We are so happy you are here and we are grateful for your commitment to the Immigration Justice Campaign as we work to raise our collective voices alongside detained immigrants across the country. We hope that this toolkit will give you the confidence and tools you need to start advocating!

Immigration Detention in the United States

The immigration detention system – and the enforcement dragnet that feeds into that system – has greatly expanded under the current administration. But the United States has long had the world's largest network of county jails, prisons, and detention centers designed to hold immigrants.

There are [currently thousands](#) of men, women, and children imprisoned by DHS in the United States while they await a decision on their immigration case or their deportation. Some of them are held in facilities owned and operated by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), or in county jails that have agreements with ICE to hold people for immigration purposes. A huge portion of the people held behind bars for immigration purposes are held in facilities owned and operated by private prison companies, such as CoreCivic or GEO Group, Inc. These private prison companies are publicly traded businesses that [profit from the contracts](#) they have with the federal government. Up to 70 percent of people in the immigration detention system are detained in prisons run by private companies.

You can learn more about the history of privatized detention in the U.S. [here](#) and [here](#).

What are we fighting for?

We are fighting for a world in which all individuals have an attorney by their side during their immigration case and for a system that emphasizes fairness and safety over incarceration and deportation. So many of the individuals we serve are asylum seekers, and we are fighting for a world in which immigrants are not imprisoned simply for seeking asylum in the United States. We believe that the government should honor the values and principles enshrined in the Refugee Act of 1980 and the decades of case law that provide that people fleeing persecution have the right to seek humanitarian relief in the United States.

What is “Advocacy” – And How Can I Use My Voice?

The Immigration Justice Campaign mobilizes attorneys and others to provide legal representation to people imprisoned in ICE detention facilities – but legal representation is only one avenue of many to fight the deportation and detention machine and press for a world in which everyone is

treated with dignity and fairness. Elected officials at every level of government make decisions related to immigration detention. They need to hear from you and others in your community! And many people in the United States are unaware of immigration detention and the grievous toll it takes on people— you have an important role to play in letting people in your community know about these issues.

There is no one way to advocate. Advocacy takes many forms. You can advance the rights of people in ICE detention facilities by writing to your member of Congress, by sharing your perspective via an op-ed in your local newspaper, or by speaking about your experiences to a community organization. Advocacy can even happen at the dinner table! Please let us know if you have certain advocacy ideas that you'd like to share with us – we would love to strategize creatively with you.

Do I have to be a lawyer to advocate?

No. All you need is a commitment to work for justice for detained immigrants. The Justice Campaign community is made up of people with a wide range of backgrounds, experiences, language skills, professional skills.

This toolkit will give you the tools you need to advocate alongside immigrants in detention. No special training required – just a willingness to fight and a commitment to justice.

Advocating During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The [COVID-19 pandemic](#) has changed the landscape of immigration detention in the U.S. Many people imprisoned in ICE detention fear that they will become infected during their detention in an immigration jail, where social distancing is largely impossible and access to adequate medical care is limited.

In addition, in most detention facilities around the country it has become increasingly difficult for detained immigrants and their attorneys to communicate. ICE has put limitations on in-person meetings and phone calls -- even legal phone calls. Pandemic-related quarantines in detention also make it hard for detainees and their attorneys to communicate.

The thousands of men, women and children currently behind bars in ICE detention need you now more than ever. Even though the pandemic limits our ability to meet in person, there are still many ways for you to advocate alongside immigrants in detention. This toolkit has been tailored to advocating during a pandemic to give you new ideas and tools during this unprecedented time.

ADVOCACY TOOLS

Here you can find different ways to advocate on behalf of, and alongside, individuals in immigration detention centers. There are many potential advocacy tools including Congressional advocacy, working with the media, and engaging with friends, family, colleagues, and other people in your community.

Advocating with Elected Officials

Understanding the issues that you are advocating for is key when reaching out to elected officials. Policymakers are not experts on every issue, and they rely heavily on public outreach and sentiment when making decisions. Your advocacy efforts can make the difference in getting policymakers to enact meaningful change. Resources found on the [Training section](#) of the Immigration Justice Campaign webpage can help you better understand the asylum process and related issues. See also the “Additional Resources” section towards the end of this toolkit.

Know Your Elected Officials

The first step is identifying who you will be reaching out to. The website, <https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>, can help you identify your Representative and Senators. Visiting your member’s website can be very helpful to identify where they stand on immigration justice issues – as well as which issues or causes are most important to her or him. Your Member’s website is also a good way to learn what committees your Member sits on and how he or she has voted on legislation related to immigration justice.

Over time you can build relationships with elected officials, and their staff, through repeated outreach and thoughtful follow-up. Strengthening these relationships is a critical strategy to help build new champions for immigration justice.

Identify Your Ask

Concise and straightforward calls-to-action for your elected officials are the single most important components of effective advocacy. Whether you reach out via email, mail, or by phone it is important to always close your message with a concrete “ask” for the recipient to take action.

Some examples of “asks” we have made in past advocacy campaigns include: Urging members of Congress to remove barriers to phone access in El Paso area detention centers, demanding that the Houston ICE Field Office release immigrants – and medically vulnerable people in particular – during the COVID-19 pandemic, and calling on Congress to increase oversight of medical care in immigration detention. You can find current Take Action campaigns on the [Advocacy section](#) of the Immigration Justice website.

There are countless other challenges that immigrants face during their imprisonment in ICE detention facilities – these are just a few!

Take Action

There are many different ways to contact elected and appointed officials. Actions include: tweeting at your representatives, emailing a letter to their office, calling their D.C. or district office, and writing opinion editorials (op-eds) calling on them to stand up for immigrants and due process. Regardless of which one you choose, ensure you're clear about why this issue matters to you and make a case for why it should also matter to the official.

By building relationships, educating policymakers, sending emails or letters, sharing your story, online or in-person, you can effect real change on behalf of immigrants across the U.S.

Advocacy does not end once you have taken action. Sending a thank-you note and follow up materials can be as important as taking action in the first place. Always follow-up after contacting policymakers to reinforce the importance of your issues and reiterate what you expect from them. Below, please find templates and sample content that you can personalize to make your case.

Do's and Don'ts of Advocacy

Do	Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Tell your story● Make it clear why the issue is important to the member's district and his/her constituents● Keep it non-partisan● Personalize the issue● Say thank you and follow up	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Lose focus● Be disrespectful or level ad hominem attacks

Working with the Media

Working with the media is an important and powerful way to advocate or supplement and amplify advocacy actions. News stories and opinion pieces can effect change on the national and local levels and help shape the narrative around immigration everywhere--from households to Capitol Hill.

Why Engage with Press?

- Raises your profile as a thought leader, someone with expertise in the law
- Demonstrates your engagement in issues surrounding immigration policies and laws

- Allows you to inform, educate, and dispel myths about detained immigrants and asylum seekers.
- Lift up the work of the Justice Campaign in order to amplify our collective efforts.

How to Engage

- **Write an Op-Ed**
 - Reflect on your volunteer experience, your client's story, and why you got involved.
 - Write a piece between 600 and 1,000 words (generally 700 or so words is the sweet spot).
 - Send the draft to Tessa Wiseman (twiseman@aila.org) and Belle Woods (bwoods@aila.org).
 - We will review, offer edits, and help pitch to outlets for placement.
- **Write a Letter to the Editor (LTE)**
 - Very short--typically under 250 words.
 - Often a response to a specific article you've read.
 - Tessa Wiseman (twiseman@aila.org) and Belle Woods (bwoods@aila.org) are happy to help review and edit these as well.
- **Take interviews with reporters from local and national outlets**
 - If you accept an interview request from a reporter, feel free to reach out to Tessa Wiseman (twiseman@aila.org) and Belle Woods (bwoods@aila.org) for talking points and messaging guidance in advance. We can also try to provide latest data/info to back up your messages.

Cautions

Nothing is ever really "off the record." Be careful what you say, write, tweet! Do NOT share identifying client information without consent with reporters or on social media even if you believe it will remain private. When in doubt, please email Tessa Wiseman (twiseman@aila.org) and Belle Woods (bwoods@aila.org).

Building Awareness and Momentum for Change in Your Community

There many creative ways that you can share what you've learned in your community. Below are just a few ideas. Please reach out to us with ideas or questions!

Join a Big Table

Every few months, we host Big Tables: informal, volunteer-led spaces in which we share and reflect on our experiences representing people in immigration detention, and brainstorm about strategies beyond legal representation to effectuate change. These Big Tables, which last about an hour and take place via Zoom, are facilitated by Justice Campaign staff and will typically generate concrete action ideas based on group ideas and input. This is a space in which we turn ideas into action.

Engaging on Social Media

Sharing about your experience on social media is another way to educate your community about the systemic problems with ICE detention, and the many hurdles that immigrants imprisoned by ICE must overcome in accessing a fair day in court. You can find sample tweets and posts in the Templates section below to help guide you.

Connecting with Fellow Advocates in Your Community

Are you looking to share your experience with fellow volunteers? Don't be shy, many of them are looking to connect, too.

Facebook is a great place for you to start conversations with other volunteers and to plan offline meetups. Just follow these steps:

- Join our [Immigration Justice Campaign](#) Facebook Group.
- Post a comment or create an event.
- Suggest a convenient time to meet up virtually or join a group call.
- Add a description of your meetup.
- Connect with other volunteers and supporters!
- Tell us about it! Share about your virtual meet-up on the Facebook group.

Speak to Your Congregation or Community Group

During the pandemic, many community groups and religious organizations are meeting virtually. Reach out to the leader of the organization to explore whether members would be interested in learning more about immigration detention.

If you have already volunteered, you could speak from your own personal experience. Describe what it was like to enter an immigration prison for the first time. How did the experience transform you? Why do you believe that immigrants deserve a fair day in court, and to fight their immigration cases outside the walls of a prison?

Use the information and resources provided in this Toolkit to guide you, and please reach out to us for additional guidance or if you have questions.

TEMPLATES AND GUIDES

The following templates and guides are intended to support you as you continue your advocacy journey with the Immigration Justice Campaign. You will find templates you can personalize to reach out to elected officials and your local media, as well as guides that show, step-by-step, how to create and share content that will broaden the reach of our message advocating for immigrants' rights.

Sample Letter to Congress

Senator/Representative [FULL NAME]
[ROOM #] [NAME] Senate/House Office Building
United States Senate/United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. [ZIP]

Dear Senator/Representative [LAST NAME],

As a resident of [City, State], and a volunteer with the Immigration Justice Campaign, I appreciate your commitment to ensuring that everyone in this country has a right to due process. I am writing today to urge you to take action to ensure that detained immigrants—and particularly those who have underlying health conditions—are released from ICE detention during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conditions within immigrant detention centers across the country are disastrous, particularly in the midst of a global pandemic. Access to medical care, personal protective equipment (PPE) and testing is woefully inadequate in ICE detention facilities, and social distancing is simply not possible. The substandard conditions are dehumanizing and dangerous to detained individuals and are fundamentally un-American.

Sinking more money in these centers is a bad investment. Funding can and should be redirected to community-based alternatives to detention.

ICE's practice of detaining thousands of men, women and children in ICE detention facilities during the pandemic simply cannot co-exist with America's core values of freedom and justice. I urge you to call on ICE to do the right thing and release people from ICE facilities. Failure to do so may be catastrophic for the thousands of people in ICE custody, the staff who support the detention centers, and the health system at large.

Thank you for your support on this important issue.

Sincerely

[FULL NAME]

[EMAIL]

[ADDRESS]

Sample Social Media

Below is a set of sample posts for Facebook and Twitter for you to use on your personal pages. Feel free to customize to fit your voice and perspective.

You can use the hashtags #ImmigrationJustice and #FairDayinCourt to join the conversation.

Twitter

- @ICEgov consistently fails to provide adequate medical care to detained individuals. That is why I am calling on ICE to exercise its discretion to release people in ICE detention, including those with chronic health conditions and disabilities, and pregnant women. #SafeAndTogether
- @ICEgov has broad discretion to choose more humane and less costly alternatives to detention (ATDs). They should exercise this discretion to the greatest extent possible in light of the #COVID19 crisis. #SafeAndTogether
- Detained individuals report the denial of PPE, housing that makes social distancing impossible, a lack of testing and treatment, and dangerous transfers between facilities. Join me and call on @ICEgov to protect those in its custody <https://bit.ly/2WzYLL4> #SafeAndTogether
- I've contacted my representative to make sure they support immigrants' right to a [#FairDayinCourt](#). Find yours now at <https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative> to ensure they support immigrants and access to counsel in immigration court.
- Systemic due process violations prevent many detained immigrants from having a [#FairDayinCourt](#). Stand with immigrants by calling on your representatives to oppose these rights abuses. [#ImmigrationJustice](#)
- Inappropriate conduct by immigration judges systematically interferes with the right to due process in American courts. Go to <https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative> and ask your elected officials to end this injustice now. [#FairDayinCourt](#)

- Judges should not be able to undermine due process for immigrants seeking humanitarian relief. Find your elected officials on <https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative> and let them know that you stand against this injustice and that they should too.
- Every person should get a [#FairDayinCourt](#), including immigrants. Call your representatives and senators to let them know that you stand with immigrants and support due process of law. You can find them at <https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>.
- Everyone should have access to free attorneys, especially our nation's most vulnerable. Call on your representative now to make sure everyone gets a fair day in court. [#ImmigrationJustice](#)

Facebook

- ICE has broad discretion to choose more humane and less costly alternatives to detention (ATDs). They should exercise this discretion to the greatest extent possible in light of the COVID-19 crisis.
- Detained individuals report the denial of PPE, housing that makes social distancing impossible, a lack of testing and treatment, and dangerous transfers between facilities. Join me and call on ICE to protect those in its custody <https://bit.ly/2WzYLL4>
- Systemic dysfunction and lack of oversight in US immigration courts regularly interfere with the approval of asylum applications. Everyone deserves a fair day in court and access to due process of law, without the influence of a judge who has decided the verdict before he or she has even heard the case. Go to <https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative> and call your elected officials now to stop this abusive behavior in our courts.

How To Call Your Representatives

You can directly ask for accountability from your elected officials by calling their offices in Congress. Follow the steps below to get started.

1. Check <https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative> to find out who your elected officials are.
2. Call the Capitol switchboard at 202-224-3121.
3. Ask them to transfer your call to your elected official's office.
4. Be clear about why you're calling! Give your name, state, and zip code and voice your comment or concern.

5. Remember your call to action.
6. Follow-up to ask what has changed since your last call.

How To Create a One-minute Video for Social Media

With the camera on your cell phone, you have a powerful storytelling tool right in your pocket. Use your phone to create short videos to help people in your community understand the urgent problems with our immigrant detention system.

Sharing your story:

- Decide what message you want to convey. This might be an update as you are on your way to a detention center, or a reflection on a volunteer placement you've already completed.
- Make sure you're in a quiet space, if possible, and will not be exposing any sensitive information about clients or other marginalized groups.
- Record the video, keeping in mind the following tips:
 - Film vertically in selfie mode.
 - Keep eye contact with the camera and hold the phone at eye level, as far out as possible.
 - Speak clearly and succinctly to make sure your message is conveyed well.
- If necessary, crop the video for clarity.
- Choose what platform on which you will post the video, whether it's Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, or another platform.
- On Facebook, use the Add Photo/Video button to upload the content from your device. Make sure to add it to the Immigration Justice Campaign group!

Livestream tips:

- Use the Live Video button on Facebook.
- Make sure you have a clear purpose, letting viewers know what is happening and why you think it needs to be shared.
- Consider ending the video with a call to action or reflection on what has happened.

How To Share "Wins" in the Justice Campaign Facebook Group

You can share your story to raise awareness about the work you did on the ground and get more people interested in doing it themselves. You can contact the Campaign to share your story in our blog and post it on our Facebook group or you can start a conversation with fellow supporters.

Sharing success stories with other advocates and volunteers through [Immigration Justice Campaign](#)'s channels is a great way to share your experiences with fellow volunteers, create momentum, and get more people involved in our important work.

When writing a post about a volunteer success (e.g. a legal win or a successful meeting with a legislator), keep the following in mind:

- Share a brief summary or overview of your experience and why you decided to work with the Immigration Justice Campaign.
- Discuss the outcome of the case or action including how you arrived at that result.
- **Do not** publish any sensitive information about a client, **including names and photos.**

See below for examples on how to share your experience:



Example 1: IJC Blog

 Taylor Levy shared a link.
May 29

The Immigration Justice Campaign and us at [Annunciation House](#) worked alongside pro bono attorneys from Kirkland & Ellis to reunite Juan and Edwin, who were forcibly separated by the government for nearly 400 days. Read about Juan and Edwin, their resilience in the face of trauma, and the team of advocates who made their reunification possible in this Texas Monthly article:



TEXASMONTHLY.COM
'He Started Calling Me Papa Again': A Separated Migrant Father and Son Reunite After 378 Days Apart

Example 2: Start a conversation with fellow supporters

Our work can be challenging! Let's do it together and uplift success stories. Don't be shy, we want to hear from you.

Additional Resources

In addition to the many resources contained on the Immigration Justice Campaign website, please see below a list of additional resources that you may find useful:

- To learn more about the ways in which the Trump administration has attempted to dismantle asylum in the U.S. read more at the National Immigrant Justice Center's (NIJC) webpage, "[A Timeline of the Trump Administration's Efforts to End Asylum.](#)"
- To learn the latest on the impact of COVID-19 in ICE detention, read more at Freedom for Immigrant's webpage, "[COVID-19 in ICE Jails and Prisons](#)" and "[Detained In Danger: The COVID-19 Pandemic Inside ICE Facilities,](#)" compiled by the Harvard College Data Analytics Group under the auspices of Human Rights First.
- To learn more about the profit motives behind ICE detention, read "[ICE Lies: Public Deception, Private Profit,](#)" by Detention Watch Network (DWN) and National Immigrant Justice Center (NIJC).

THANK YOU!

The Immigration Justice Campaign has assisted thousands of immigrants thanks to committed volunteers like you. Your advocacy is important now, but the way to achieve justice for immigrants and guarantee their access to legal representation and a fair day in court is by building community and demanding change together.

If you have any questions don't hesitate to reach out to campaignhelp@immcouncil.org.