

# BUILDING BRIDGES FOR AMERICA

**Civics for  
Change**



# Why this topic?

IT IS IMPORTANT FOR THE GRASSROOTS ORGANIZER TO UNDERSTAND HOW GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS WORK IN ORDER TO EFFECT CHANGE.



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# Who should use this workbook?

THIS WORKBOOK IS FOCUSED ON GRASSROOTS ORGANIZERS AND INDIVIDUALS PLANNING THEIR OWN ADVOCACY.

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU, AND YOUR ORGANIZATION'S MEMBERS, ARE WELL INFORMED AND CAN MAKE YOUR VIEWS HEARD BY POLICY MAKERS.



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# This workbook will provide:

## OVERVIEW OF THE BASICS

We will focus on the structure of government and who are the policy makers. We will then work on your primary resource "A Governmental Cheat Sheet".

## IDENTIFY SPECIFIC ISSUES

You will identify 1-2-3 issues, campaigns, and causes, that motivate your organization to action.

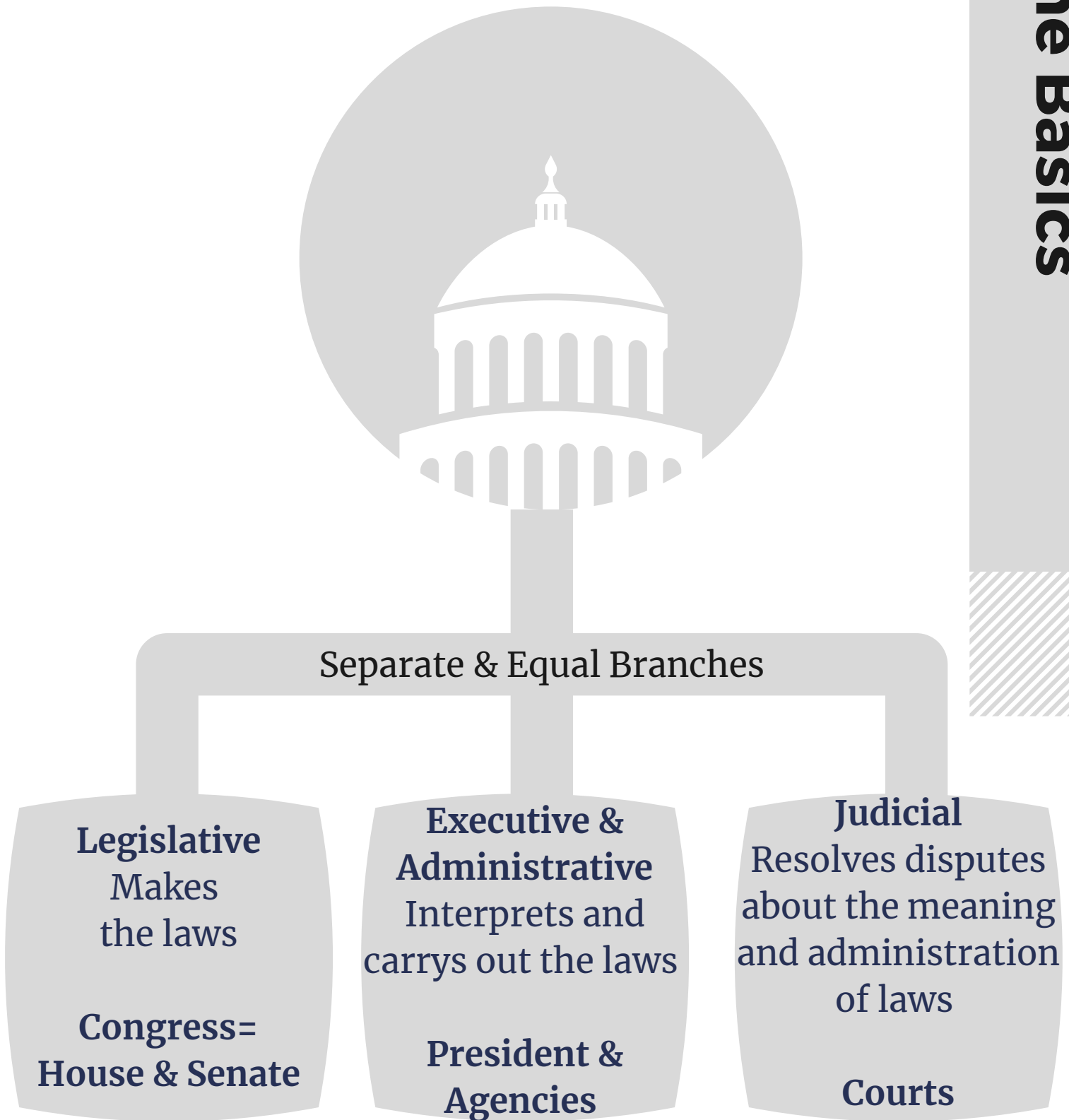
## HOW TO EFFECT CHANGE/ACTION

You will select and plan whom you should contact and what you should say.



# THE GOVERNMENT

## The Basics





## IDENTIFY

Identify the person, elected or appointed body, or agency who is responsible for the law affecting your members.

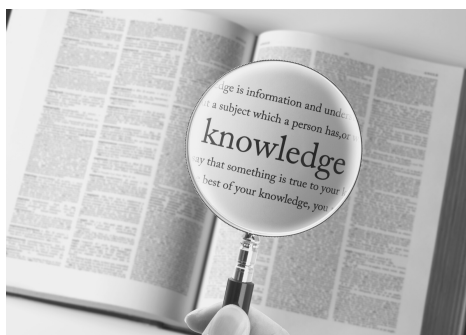
## ADMINISTRATION

After the law is passed, focus on executive and administration agencies that administer the law(s).

## JURISDICTION

Legislative, executive and judicial actions are effective within specific jurisdiction. People in those jurisdictions will be the most responsive to your message/request.





## TAKEAWAYS

Before you begin your advocacy around an issue, make sure you have the correct information.

- Is the issue addressed by legislation or the administration of a law or policy by the executive or administrative agencies that implement it?
- Who are the agencies or people with jurisdiction over that issue?
- How do your members figure out who is THEIR representative?

Before you support or oppose a candidate.

- What office are they running for?
- What branch is the office in? Legislative, executive, or judicial?
- What is the jurisdiction (area) covered?

## Sidebar: Jurisdiction



# Your Jurisdiction

## Step

1

### Preparing your cheat sheet.

This sheet will help you identify the specifics about your area (jurisdiction) and will vary depending on the issue(s) you are addressing. Get started by filling in what you know and fill in the blanks later.

State .....

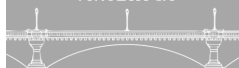
County .....

City, Town, Village or  
Unincorporated area .....

School District .....

Special Service  
District  
(i.e. sewer) .....

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# Your Policymakers

## Step



You can search online and find this informaiton.

U.S. Senator (1)

name, party, contact info.

U.S. Senator (2)

name, party, contact info.

U.S. Representative

name, party, district, contact info.

Governor

name, party, contact info.

State Senator

name, party, district, contact info.

State Representative

name, party, district, contact info.

Mayor

contact information

County Commissioners

contact information

City/Town Council

contact information

School Board Member

contact information

## Issue Identification

Now is the time to identify the issues or campaigns that are motivating you to take action. This list will change, but it is a good exercise to plan your advocacy.

### Write down two important issues in each category

Issues that affect you/your members in an immediate and practical way (examples: "The roads in my area are all broken and are causing damage to my car." "I want my son to get his COVID shot, but it is not available.")

1.

2.

Issues that affects the community in which your organization operates (examples: "I think school vouchers harm public schools" "I am concerned about homelessness in my area." "I am concerned about voting rights in federal elections.")

1.

2.

### Are there organizations working on these issues?

**What are some terms to use consistently and positively to describe your issue? Avoid repeating opponents' wording.**



This exercise will answer several important questions:

- Who is in charge?
- What is the message?
- Where to deliver it?

We encourage you to use your own words, make it personal and keep the message simple. See the following pages for sample issues

### Who is in charge?

- 
- 

### Identify, frame and formulate (what we can all agree on)

- 
- 
- 

### My Message?

### Where to "deliver" my message (phone call, letter, postcard, email, in-person, op-ed)

- 
- 
- 

Walking your members through this step-by-step approach will help them confidently reach out about an issue or law.

# Example

## Issue #1 Bad Roads

This exercise will answer several important questions:

- Who is in charge?
- What is the message?
- Where to deliver it?

### Who is in charge? Mayor & City Council

- Mayor John Doe
- My City Council Member

### Identify, frame and formulate (what we can all agree on)

- Good roads help our community grow.
- I need good roads to get to work, school, and access to healthcare.
- Policy makers should address bad roads to help the community.

### My Message?

I live at XXXX, I am one of your constituents,  
The roads in my area, specifically XXXX street are in need of repair,  
I am a hard worker trying to provide for my family. I rely on good roads to get to work so I can support my family. Bad roads have caused damage to my car and traffic makes me late to work. I really need my job and do not have extra money for repairs,  
I ask that you take the steps necessary to get this problem fixed,  
Thank you

### Where to "deliver" my message

- Phone call.
- Send email or letter/postcard
- Attend a public hearing, if public testimony is permitted
- Write an op-ed (mention the officials by name)



# Example

## Issue #2 School Vouchers

This exercise will answer several important questions:

- Who is in charge?
- What is the message?
- Where to deliver it?

### Who is in charge? Governor & Legislature

- Governor, Mary Smith
- Superintendent of Public Instruction
- My State Representative
- My State Senator

### Identify, frame and formulate (what we can all agree on)

- Consider reviewing information from advocacy groups that support your point of view, start with positive messages.

### My Message?

- I am a longtime resident of XXXX (state). My address is XXXX, I am one of your constituents.
- I value public education because it helps people get ahead, I needed public education to go to college and get a good job. Our society relies on an educated workforce. I have X children and grandchildren and I want to make sure they have a good public education.
- I am concerned that school vouchers make it harder for our public schools to hire good teachers. I ask you to oppose legislation that would increase the use of vouchers. Thank you.

### Where to "deliver" my message

- Phone call.
- Send email or letter/postcard, and/or write an op-ed (mention the officials by name)
- Attend a public hearing, if public testimony is permitted



# Example

## Issue #3 Voting Rights

### Who is in charge?

#### Federal Voting Rights = Federal Legislation

- My 2 U.S. Senators
- My Congressperson (Representative)

### Identify, frame and formulate (what we can all agree on)

- Look at advocacy groups (i.e., Common Cause, League of Women Voters, Fair Fight, Let Them Vote) for talking points. Look for consistency and positive messages.

### My Message?

- U.S. Senators
  - I am a long term resident in our state. I have voted in every election since I was allowed to. Voting rights are the foundation of our democracy.
  - I believe in fairness and that means that everyone should vote, therefore polls should be open for longer hours and more days so more people can vote without taking off work.
  - I urge you to support the For the People Act to protect voting rights.
- Congressman (Representative) - YOUR representative
  - (if support) Thank you for supporting the For the People Act, I hope you will continue to work for voting rights.
  - (if no support) I am sorry you voted to oppose the For the People Act. I believe in fairness. The Act will protect fair elections. Please reconsider your opposition.

### Where to "deliver" my message

- Phone call.
- Send email or letter/ postcard, and/or write an op-ed (mention officials by name)
- Attend a town hall, speak if public testimony is permitted



# OTHER AVAILABLE TOOLS

AVAILABLE AT  
[WWW.BUILDINGBRIDGESFORAMERICA.COM](http://WWW.BUILDINGBRIDGESFORAMERICA.COM)

## REAL TALK: UNLOCK YOUR POLITICAL POWER

Workshop to connect to your story and share your values.

## ORGANIZING TOOLBOX

Ready to print infographics, online presentations and workbooks.

## DAYS OF ACTION

Join Building Bridges for Days of Action throughout the week to support candidates and issues.

## REAL TALK: SAY THIS, NOT THAT

Workshop to understand the importance and how to write effective progressive messaging.

## BRIDGES TO THE LOCAL

Support local down ballot candidates throughout the U.S.

## TEAM BB PICKS

Find resources to support your learning journey.

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# BUILDING BRIDGES FOR AMERICA LEADERSHIP TEAM

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**Remember this**

**THE SECRET OF CHANGE  
IS TO FOCUS ALL YOUR  
ENERGY NOT ON  
FIGHTING THE OLD BUT  
ON BUILDING THE NEW.**

**- DAN MILLMAN**

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# Next Steps

**Join the Building Bridges for America  
Training Center @  
[www.buildingbridgesforamerica.com](http://www.buildingbridgesforamerica.com)**

**Share this resource and invite others  
to effect change with you.**

## EMAIL

[buildingbridges4america@gmail.com](mailto:buildingbridges4america@gmail.com)

## WEBSITE

[WWW.BUILDINGBRIDGESFORAMERICA.COM](http://WWW.BUILDINGBRIDGESFORAMERICA.COM)

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