



California Advocacy Quick Start Guide

*YOUR FIRST STEPS TO EFFECTIVE
POLICY INFLUENCE*



*Empowered Voices Consulting: Transforming Passionate Advocates
into Strategic Changemakers*

Justina Erpelding, Founder

10+ Years of Legislative Experience | 1,000+ Advocates Trained

www.empoweredvoicesconsulting.com

WELCOME TO YOUR ADVOCACY JOURNEY

Congratulations on taking the first step toward making real change in California! This guide will give you the foundation you need to start advocating effectively, but remember—successful advocacy is both an art and a science that requires strategic knowledge and ongoing practice.



THE CALIFORNIA POLICY LANDSCAPE: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The Reality Check

Every year, California allocates over \$300 billion in state funding. Thousands of policy decisions are made that affect millions of lives. Yet most passionate advocates never learn how to effectively influence these processes.

The Opportunity

With the right knowledge and approach, everyday people create extraordinary change. My clients have:

- ✓ Preserved 11,000 childcare slots for low-income families
- ✓ Influenced millions in state budget allocations
- ✓ Successfully advocated for policy changes affecting thousands

The difference? They learned the strategic approach outlined in this guide—and much more through personalized training.



YOUR QUICK START FRAMEWORK


IDENTIFY YOUR POLICY WINDOW

California operates on specific timelines for budget and policy decisions.

Key Insight: Timing is everything in advocacy. There are critical moments when your voice matters most.

Quick Action:

- Research when your issue typically gets discussed (budget cycle, legislative calendar)
- Mark key dates in your calendar
- Plan your advocacy activities around these windows

 **Pro Tip:** California's budget process involves multiple distinct phases throughout the year, each with different influence opportunities and key decision points. Understanding these phases and when to engage strategically is covered in detail in our comprehensive training sessions.


KNOW YOUR DECISION-MAKERS

Not all legislators have equal influence on your issue.


Key Insight: Committee chairs and members have more power over specific topics than general legislators.

Quick Action:

- Identify which committees oversee your issue
- Find the committee chair and members
- Research their voting history and stated priorities

 **Your Homework:** Create a simple spreadsheet with:

- Legislator name
- Committee assignments
- Contact information
- Their position on similar issues

 **Pro Tip:** There are insider strategies for identifying the 3-5 legislators who truly control your issue's fate. These relationship-mapping techniques are taught in our advanced workshops.

CRAFT YOUR CORE MESSAGE

Your message must be clear, compelling, and memorable. Key Insight: Legislators hear hundreds of requests. Yours must stand out.

Quick Action: Create a 30-second "elevator pitch" that includes:

- The problem (what's happening now)
- The solution (what you want them to do)
- The impact (who benefits and how)

Example Framework: "As someone from [your district], I'm asking you to [specific action] because [compelling reason]. This will [specific benefit] for [number] of constituents in your district."

💡 **Pro Tip:** The most effective advocacy messages use a specific psychological framework that triggers action. This framework and dozens of proven message templates are provided in our consultation sessions.



CHOOSE YOUR ADVOCACY METHOD

DIFFERENT SITUATIONS REQUIRE DIFFERENT APPROACHES

Key Insight: A phone call, email, and in-person meeting each serve different purposes.

Quick Action Options:

- Email: Best for providing detailed information and follow-up
- Phone calls: Effective for urgent issues and building relationships
- In-person meetings: Most powerful for complex issues requiring discussion

Start Here: Choose one method and master it before adding others.

💡 **Pro Tip:** Research shows that advocates who use multiple contact methods strategically are significantly more successful than those who rely on single approaches. This multi-touch strategy and advanced relationship-building techniques are core components of our training programs.



Advocacy is an ongoing relationship, not a one-time request.

Key Insight: Consistent, strategic follow-up separates effective advocates from everyone else.

Quick Action:

- Keep records of all interactions
- Set calendar reminders for follow-up
- Thank legislators when they take action
- Update them on how their support made a difference

💡 **Pro Tip:** There are specific follow-up protocols that turn a single interaction into an ongoing advocacy relationship. These relationship-management systems are taught through our personalized coaching.

COMMON ADVOCACY MISTAKES THAT KILL YOUR INFLUENCE

✗ **Mistake #1:** Generic Mass Emails

Why it fails: Legislators can spot form letters immediately. Quick fix: Always personalize with local examples and district-specific information.

✗ **Mistake #2:** Wrong Timing

Why it fails: Advocating after decisions are made wastes everyone's time. Quick fix: Learn the legislative calendar and advocate during active consideration periods.

✗ **Mistake #3:** Focusing Only on Problems

Why it fails: Legislators need actionable solutions, not just complaints. Quick fix: Always pair problem identification with specific policy solutions.

✗ **Mistake #4:** Giving Up After One Contact

Why it fails: Policy change requires sustained pressure and relationship building. Quick fix: Plan for multiple touchpoints over time.

💡 **Advanced Strategy:** Based on my decade of experience training advocates, I've identified the most common strategic errors that undermine even passionate advocates' efforts. Our comprehensive training addresses these specific pitfalls and provides proven systems to overcome them.



YOUR NEXT STEPS: FROM BEGINNER TO STRATEGIC CHANGEMAKER

Immediate Actions (This Week):

- ✓ Complete the 5-step framework above
- ✓ Identify your top 3 target legislators
- ✓ Draft your core message using the template
- ✓ Make your first contact

Developing Your Skills (Next 30 Days):

- Track what works and what doesn't
- Join relevant advocacy organizations
- Attend a public hearing or committee meeting
- Connect with other advocates in your issue area

Mastering Strategic Advocacy (Ongoing):

This guide gives you the foundation, but effective advocacy requires ongoing skill development.

⚡ What's Missing from This Guide:

- The complicated California budget process timeline
- Advanced relationship-building protocols
- Insider strategies for committee navigation
- Crisis advocacy response techniques
- Coalition building and management
- Digital advocacy campaign integration
- Legislative hearing preparation and testimony coaching

READY TO ACCELERATE YOUR IMPACT?

You now have the basics to start advocating effectively. But here's what I've learned after 10+ years in California's legislative landscape: **the difference between hoping for change and creating change lies in the strategic details.**

Individual Advocacy Consultation

Perfect for: Individual advocates ready to amplify their personal impact

- Personalized strategy session for your specific issue
- Custom advocacy plan with timeline and target identification
- Advanced messaging and relationship-building techniques
- Ongoing coaching support

Organizational Training Workshops

Perfect for: Nonprofits, community groups, and advocacy organizations

- Team training in California's policy and budget processes
- Customized workshops for your sector and issues
- Group coaching and strategy development
- Follow-up support and accountability

Speaking & Keynote Services

Perfect for: Conferences, summits, and large gatherings

- Engaging presentations that inspire and educate
- Practical takeaways participants can implement immediately
- Customized content for your audience and event goals



CONNECT WITH EMPOWERED VOICES CONSULTING

About Justina Erpelding

Justina brings over a decade of hands-on experience navigating California's legislative landscape. As founder of Empowered Voices Consulting, she has:

- Built a grassroots advocacy coalition from zero to over 1,000 members
- Mentored 32 advocacy leaders
- Directly influenced state budget decisions, preserving 11,000 childcare slots
- Saved providers millions in regulatory costs
- Developed comprehensive training programs, transforming political novices into confident advocates

Her expertise spans policy development, implementation, budget processes, and strategic advocacy—making California's complex governmental processes accessible to organizations and individuals ready to create meaningful change.



READY TO MOVE FROM HOPING TO CREATING CHANGE?

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Schedule Your Strategy Session

Every successful advocacy campaign starts with a strategic foundation. Let's discuss how to turn your passion into policy wins.

Special rates available for nonprofit organizations.