

Reimagining State Policy  
*in pursuit of*  
Black Reproductive Justice

**voice**  
IN OUR OWN  
National Black  
Women's  
Reproductive Justice  
Agenda

# STATE ADVOCACY DAY WORKBOOK



Organization Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# INTRODUCTION

At In Our Own Voice: National Black Women’s Reproductive Justice Agenda, our core mission is to amplify the voices of Black women leaders at the national and state levels in our ongoing fight to secure Reproductive Justice for all people.

We develop new and expansive policy solutions to the most pressing crises we face as a society. Working across all levels of government, we work to educate and mobilize Black women, girls and gender-expansive people on a span of issues, from maternal health, abortion access, and contraceptive equity, to economic justice, voting rights, and environmental justice.

Our work is rooted in a Reproductive Justice framework. We believe in the human right to control our bodies, our sexuality, our gender, our work, and our reproduction. And we know that Reproductive Justice can only be achieved when all people have the complete economic, social, and political power and mental, physical, and community health to make decisions about their bodies and their futures.

At In Our Own Voice, we are *grounded in state partnership—and are always at work to reimagine state policy*. Together, with Black-women-led organizations we are able to keep a close eye on policies moving throughout state legislatures, and work to hold state elected officials accountable to our collective vision for Reproductive Justice. This is important now more than ever, as extreme legislators in states across the country continue to introduce harmful restrictions and bans that put reproductive freedom in crisis. This new and ever-changing landscape is volatile, untenable, and disastrous to Black women, girls, and gender-expansive people.

This guide is a tool for organizations and advocates to plan their own State Advocacy Days. *The italicized content within the guide serves as a valuable resource, offering a series of thought-provoking reflection questions designed to engage and guide the user. These questions prompt individuals to contemplate and delve deeper into the various aspects of their advocacy efforts, encouraging a more comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand.* Let’s mobilize across states to ensure Reproductive Justice policy priorities are at the forefront of legislative decisions impacting our communities.

# LET'S IMAGINE

Take a minute to imagine: What is your organization's overall legislative vision for Black women, girls, gender-expansive individuals and their communities?

This might be in the next year, five years, or five hundred years—answer with what inspires and excites you the most.

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## LET'S GET GROUNDED—ADVOCACY 101

### What is a State Advocacy Day?

A State Advocacy Day is dedicated to the meeting, educating, and engaging state officials to identify and discuss issues. In our case, issues to advance our vision for Reproductive Justice. State Advocacy Days are one form of state advocacy. Some other forms of state advocacy include working to:

- Invite state legislators to your offices and/or events that your organization is hosting. If possible, invite them to speak during the event.
- Call or write legislators to share information, concerns, and personal stories about the impact of specific policies or practices on Black women and families.
- Recruit community coalition members and local advocates to meet with state legislators or their staff or participate in a public forum being held by legislators or candidates.
- Submit a letter to the editor on an issue and the impact that sexual health and Reproductive Justice legislation has on the wellbeing and quality of life for Black women.
- Provide policymakers with the background information they need to write proclamations for key moments, like Black Maternal Health Week.
- Engage on social media platforms like X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok to reach the public, elected officials and your constituencies.

### Your Role in Advocacy: Identifying Strengths and Opportunities

Advocacy is targeted action directed at changing the policies, positions or programs at any type of institution, at any level, and encompasses a broad range of activities. It might include planning a state advocacy day; inviting your state legislator to an event your organization is hosting; making calls or sending letters in support of a specific action or piece of legislation; recruiting community members for public forums; providing legislators with background research or draft legislation; or activating social media activations to mobilize constituents.

Here are some prompts to consider.

How does your organization currently advocate?

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What communities are you advocating for/uplifting?

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What are your advocacy strengths?

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What advocacy strategies do you need to strengthen?

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# LET'S ANCHOR OUR ISSUES: POLICY PRIORITIES

## Policy Priorities

Our national policy agenda includes a number of Reproductive Justice priorities. What are the top priorities within your organization?

*What Reproductive Justice policies is your organization prioritizing for the upcoming legislative session? After identifying your organization's key issues, prioritize 1-3 to advocate on to ensure advocates have ample time to convey their points effectively.*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

## Goal-Setting: What are your goals and desired outcomes?

What are your advocacy goals for the upcoming legislative session? If successful, what are the three things you would have accomplished?

*Think broadly about your goals: are you trying to get a bill introduced or passed; pass a resolution; succeed in a ballot measure?*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## Key Asks

Ensure that your requests are closely tied to your key issue areas. These can range from supporting a specific bill, requesting inclusion at an event, or inviting officials to your organization's event. Aligning your asks with your key issues enhances the relevance and impact of your advocacy efforts.

*What are your key asks? What will you be asking state policymakers to do?*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_



## Education

Engage your legislator by sharing key insights about your organization and policy priorities.

*What would you like your legislator to learn about your organization and your policy priorities?*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## Mapping Relationships

Legislators have different relationships with your organization and staff. These include:

- **Champion** – a legislator who has demonstrated their knowledge and dedication to improving Reproductive Justice issues
- **Ally** – a legislator who takes action to support your organization and efforts
- **Powerholder** – a legislator who holds a ranking position (etc. committee chairperson or speaker)
- **Powerbroker** – a legislator who is able to influence the decisions of other legislators

*What state policymakers do you have strong relationships with? List those who know, or whose staff know, you or your organization by name. Add their title in the third column. In the right-hand column, categorize them. It is beneficial to observe whether the legislator serves as the chair of a particular committee or caucus, or if they have introduced a specific bill that holds significance for your organization.*

NAME	TITLE	TYPE OF RELATIONSHIP (CHAMPION, ALLY, POWERHOLDER, POWERBROKER)
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		

# LET'S GET ORGANIZED: PLANNING YOUR STATE ADVOCACY DAY

Planning a State Advocacy Day will require strong coordination, clear processes, and a realistic timeline to ensure that you are conducting outreach and setting up meetings in enough time to be successful. The resources below will help you ensure you're prepared and ready for your State Advocacy Day.

## Event Type

Decide what type of event you are planning. Decide if your State Advocacy Day will primarily be meetings with legislators, will plan some type of an awareness or take-action event, or a combination of those activities? Here are some ideas of types of advocacy days you can plan:

- In-Person 1:1 Meetings: Advocates can meet at or near the state capitol with legislators 1:1 or in small groups.
- In-Person Panel Discussions: Advocates can also meet together with respective representatives for panel discussions that engage additional legislators and their constituents.
- Virtual Advocacy Day: Advocates can set up virtual meetings with legislators 1:1 or in small groups.
- Awareness, Take-Action: Advocates can frame their Advocacy Day to focus on asking advocates and legislators to take a specific action. Garner press, social media, and amplification events to drive awareness around your event and issue. Additionally, you can also dedicate time to call, email, or connect with legislators on social media to engage a broader group of constituents.

What type of event are you planning? \_\_\_\_\_

## State Legislature Planning Procedures

What is the procedure to have your Advocacy Day recognized by the state legislature?

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What is the procedure to secure space at your state legislature?

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## Event Date

Review legislative calendars to determine when legislators are available to meet and when your event will have the biggest impact. The date of your event may be determined by legislative session calendars. Session calendars are available on state legislative websites. Choose several possible date options, and be flexible to dates that work best for meetings at your State Capitol or the legislator's home district office.

When does your state's legislative session begin and end? \_\_\_\_\_

What month do you plan to host your Advocacy Day? \_\_\_\_\_

What day of the week do you plan to host your Advocacy Day? \_\_\_\_\_





## Materials/Resources

It's critical that bring key documents and leave them behind for state policymakers. The "leave behind" document should be state-specific and incorporate data and stories from Black women, girls, and gender-expansive individuals and their families that address the issue on which you are advocating. Use the chart below to list the documents that will be needed.

- What will be included in your leave behind packet for the legislators?
- What other documents will be needed to accomplish your Advocacy Day? Examples may include one pagers about the organization, policy priorities and fact sheets.

ITEM	RESPONSIBLE ORGANIZATION
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

## Partners

Who are the key organizations you can partner with for your state's Advocacy Day? What capacity and resources can they bring to support your efforts?

ORGANIZATION	HOW WE PARTNER
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

## Amplification

Boost visibility for your Advocacy Day through newsletters, emails, and various social media platforms. Emphasize the importance of spreading awareness about the Advocacy Day and empower individuals to actively participate.

What is your amplification plan for your State Advocacy Day?

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What is the procedure to hold a press conference at your state legislature?

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Will you reach out to press outlets?

If yes, what press outlets do you currently have relationships with?

1. 

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2. 

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3. 

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4. 

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5. 

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How will you utilize social media? You can create a social media toolkit to establish message discipline on social channels, and equip advocates with a resource to easily participate.

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**OUTREACH (LEGISLATIVE)**

**TASK**

**OWNER**

**DEADLINE**

Building contact list of state policymakers

Drafting communication to policymakers

Managing communication with state legislators and their staff

**PREPARATION MATERIAL AND RESOURCES**

**TASK**

**OWNER**

**DEADLINE**

Aggregating and printing resources



# STATE ADVOCACY DAY VISIT ETIQUETTE

DOS	DON'TS
Wear professional attire	Wear jeans, t-shirts, or flip-flops
If multiple people are participating in a visit, assign someone in your group the role of facilitator	Talk over one another or leave someone without a speaking role
Make it personal. Talk about who you are and what expertise you bring as a constituent working in the field, or as a concerned community member	Leave the human or personal element out of your conversation
Offer solutions about what is working in addition to what can be done better	Complain or point fingers
Be succinct and to the point when telling your story or delivering your ask (practice this beforehand!)	Ramble, go off-topic, or talk about 10 different things
Thank the legislators for any positive actions they have taken on the issue	Forget to say thank you for past efforts
Read the legislator's or staffer's body language to assess their attentiveness	Continue talking despite cues that the meeting is over or the legislator/staffer is not receptive to your request
Assess the legislator's or staffer's knowledge on Reproductive Justice policies and issues	Use jargon or shorthand language, unless the staffer is well-versed on the issue being discussed
Go with the flow	Be surprised or offended if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The staffer does not know about your organization or issues</li><li>• You do not get to say everything you want to</li><li>• Meet in the hallway or lobby area of the office</li><li>• Meet with a staff person rather than your state legislator</li></ul>
Keep your group small	Bring large groups. State offices are small and space can be limited, especially on busy days.
Follow-up with a thank you, relevant information, and updates. Think about how you will next engage the legislators that you met with.	Fail to follow-up



# SAMPLES, TEMPLATES & ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

## Sample Advocacy Letter

[Date]  
[Name of Public Official]  
[Office Address]

Dear [Name of Public Official],

My name is [YOUR NAME]. I am a constituent living in [YOUR CITY/TOWN] and am engaged with [STATE PARTNER ORGANIZATION NAME] based in [YOUR CITY/TOWN].

I am writing to you because Black women, girls, and gender-expansive people are dynamic leaders in every part of this country; they are often the backbone of our families, our movements, our economy, and our democracy. They rise up in moments of crisis, organize, and pave the way towards racial, gender, and Reproductive Justice. But two truths can exist.

At the very same time, Black women, girls and gender-expansive people face continued and perpetual state, local, and federal attacks on their civil and human rights. Since that decision, bodily autonomy has continued to be under attack especially in states, where extreme legislators have worked to introduce harmful restrictions and bans. This new landscape is volatile, untenable, and disastrous to Black women, girls, and gender-expansive people.

As we assess the threats to the livelihood, safety, and joy of Black women, girls, and gender-expansive people, I am focused on [INSERT CHOSEN ISSUE] and I am specifically looking for [DESIRED ACTION].

We are currently seeing [EXPLAIN ISSUE, SHARE PERSONAL DETAILS AND ANECDOTES]. Please consider the following:

[LIST DATA SOURCE 1], [ADD EVIDENCE AND FACTS].

[LIST DATA SOURCE 2], [ADD EVIDENCE AND FACTS].

I believe that your voice should be heard regarding this issue, by taking action and [LIST POLICY OUTCOME RECOMMENDATIONS].

My team at [STATE PARTNER ORGANIZATION] and I are looking forward to a response from you on your next steps to address this issue. Should you have any questions, or request more information, we are happy to speak further.

Best,  
[YOUR NAME]

## Sample Thank You Letter

[Date]  
[Name of Public Official]  
[Office Address]

Dear [Name of Public Official],

Thank you [and your staff] for meeting with me on [DATE]. As a reminder, I am a constituent living in [YOUR CITY/TOWN] and am engaged with [STATE PARTNER ORGANIZATION NAME] based in [YOUR CITY/TOWN].

As we discussed at our meeting, Black women, girls, and gender-expansive people are dynamic leaders in every part of this country; they are often the backbone of our families, our movements, our economy, our democracy. They rise up in moments of crisis, organize, and pave the way towards racial, gender, and Reproductive Justice.

As we assess the threats to the livelihood, safety, and joy of Black women,, girls, and gender-expansive people, I am focused on [INSERT CHOSEN ISSUE] and I am specifically looking for [DESIRED ACTION].

Again, I believe that your voice should be heard regarding this issue, by taking action and [LIST POLICY OUTCOME RECOMMENDATIONS].

My team at [STATE PARTNER ORGANIZATION] and I are looking forward to learning about your next steps to address this issue. Should you have any questions, or request more information, we are happy to speak further.

Best,

[YOUR NAME]  
CONTACT INFORMATION (i.e., phone or email)

Legislative Advocacy Toolkit (QR Code and picture of it)





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[www.blackrj.org](http://www.blackrj.org)

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