

## Watchdog for Science Toolkit

As both a scientist and a member of your local community, you have a unique opportunity to engage with decisionmakers. Your elected officials want to earn your support as a constituent (or at least avoid your opposition). They also need expert advice on policy issues with a scientific component. You have a powerful voice if you know how to most effectively use it.

Attacks on scientists, federal science agencies, evidence-based decisionmaking, and the democratic process are all too evident and weaken our collective ability to protect public health and the environment. A unified and informed chorus that defends the institutions, processes, and people who are threatened creates resistance to these attacks. And resistance starts at home. Working locally, you are best positioned to apply pressure and hold your elected officials accountable.

The Union of Concerned Scientists' (UCS) Science Network is comprised of roughly 20,000 scientists who use their expertise for the public good. We also encourage technical and issue area experts to defend and strengthen science for policy. When you sign up to help UCS watchdog for science, we'll provide you with information on threats to science and opportunities to support science-based decisionmaking. From there, you and your colleagues customize the message to be most meaningful and impactful to their communities and elected officials.

### Stay Connected and Informed

It's challenging for the busy scientist to keep track of the many Trump administration and congressional actions and proposals that relate to science policy. Congressional and administration procedures are complex, and it is often hard to evaluate what threats or opportunities are most immediate and where the opportunities are to make a difference.

When you join UCS in defending science, we'll keep you informed but not overwhelmed. Our staff in Washington is constantly in touch with government officials to monitor policy developments. UCS experts verify and analyze information about threats to the use of science in policymaking. Our outreach team connects with experts

with community organizations. Together, we weed out the noise so you can engage on the substance.

To begin, join our UCS Science Network LinkedIn Community and follow us on Twitter (@scinetucs). This is the go-to place to connect with UCS and others to stay informed about the attacks on science, scientists, and evidence-based policymaking. You will find active conversations about speaking with policymakers and the media, the latest updates on science-based policy, and opportunities to engage.

When you sign up to help UCS defend science, monthly conference calls will give you the opportunity to actively dive deeper into the latest news from Washington and from your local communities. You'll actively be a part of the conversations with opportunities to submit questions and comments. You'll also receive our customized action alerts that provide tailored updates on events, legislation, and opportunities to take action.

## **Take Action**

There are many ways to stay in tune with the actions and opportunities that we've vetted for you. Now, it's up to you to take the actions that you are most interested in and best fit your time and interests. Below, we've compiled a short list of opportunities that are a good place to start. You can find the actions listed below on our toolkit website [www.ucsus.org/watchdogtoolkit](http://www.ucsus.org/watchdogtoolkit).

**Sign up to help watchdog for science**, and encourage colleagues to work with you and others in the local area to defend science.

**Sign on to *Science and the Public Interest: An Open Letter to President-Elect Trump and the 115th Congress*** and let the Trump Administration and Congress know that you call for integrity, transparency, and independence in using science to inform federal policies. And, forward to two people in your network.

**Join other efforts to support science.** Sign up for the April People's Climate March (<https://peoplesclimate.org>) and the March for Science ([www.marchforscience.com](http://www.marchforscience.com)).

**Let federal scientists know how to communicate concerns securely and anonymously with UCS.** Know any federal scientists? UCS has a long history of working with federal employees to expose political interference in science and hold bad actors accountable. We want to hear your stories that describe how government data and government experts protect public health and safety. We also want to hear about actions that compromise the ability of science to fully inform the policymaking process—and the consequences of those actions.

**Call each US senator's state director or chief of staff.** Start to build a relationship with the staff at the senators' offices. Talk to them about the importance of science-

based policies. Offer to be a resource for staff if they are looking into something that fits your expertise. Find your senators' websites and contact information at <https://www.senate.gov/senators/contact>.

**Write a Letter to the Editor (LTE) of your local newspaper.** Bring your perspective as a member of the local community and a scientist to talk about how health, safety, and environmental protections affect your state. In the letter, speak directly to your senators, members of your community, and local businesses, and speak from the perspective of a concerned scientist, parent, educator, etc. The more personalized and state-relevant you make it, the more impact it will have. For more detailed tips for writing an LTE, see [www.ucsus.org/writingLTES](http://www.ucsus.org/writingLTES).

## **Sparking Community Action**

If you're ready for more engaged efforts, UCS will provide the how-to's and tips for creating community and effecting change on the issues that are most important to you. Decisionmakers are concerned with their constituents' approval (or disapproval) and raising the political cost of making a decision is the best way to leverage your power as a community. Use your voice and organize others to have the most impact.

Mobilizing and building a base of informed and active people is essential to an influential and sustainable effort. Make it as easy as possible, especially in the beginning, for people to get involved. Give emerging leaders opportunities to step up, support efforts, and take on pieces of the work. Make things fun by combining food, arts, music, guest speakers, or any number of special events or activities. Get creative! Lastly, have a method of communication that keeps people connected after the actions have taken place.

UCS fact sheets on the following subjects provide a brief overview of the various ways you can build power and get attention for your issue (found online at [www.ucsus.org/watchdogtoolkit](http://www.ucsus.org/watchdogtoolkit)):

- *Using Social Media*
- *Hosting a Letter-Writing Party*
- *Hosting a Public Education Event with Community Groups*
- *Organizing a Call-In Day*
- *Strengthening Your Impact through Collaboration*
- *Talking with Your Elected Official at Public Events*
- *Writing a Sign-On Letter*

## **Resources and Support**

In addition to the social media platforms of LinkedIn and Twitter as well as UCS emails and monthly calls, UCS has a number of print and video resources to keep you

informed, engaged, and supported. For the full suite of offerings go to [www.ucsusa.org/sciencenetwork](http://www.ucsusa.org/sciencenetwork).

**Skills-building and informational webinars.** UCS hosts webinars covering tips and tricks for a variety of topics, including speaking with policymakers, communicating to unconvinced audiences, protecting yourself from harassment, and using social media while avoiding harassment.

**A Scientist's Guide to Talking with the Media.** Science journalists and communications experts have written the how-to guide (available as both a full book and desk reference) to bringing your science into the mainstream media. By supporting journalists, you can help bring the evidence to the front of the conversation.

**Science Under Scrutiny.** This report is a resource for dealing with the 21<sup>st</sup> century reality of online attacks. The guide provides clear do's and don'ts for engaging with harassment online and in the media, and explains what to do if you are subject to a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request.

**Secure information-sharing and data protection.** If you have information about actions that are impeding the ability of science or scientists to protect public health and the environment, we have several secure channels to communicate with you. ***Most importantly, do not use your work address or resources to communicate.*** Using Protonmail—which does not require authentication—you can send us anonymous email to [ScientificIntegrity@protonmail.com](mailto:ScientificIntegrity@protonmail.com). Some of our staff use an encryption tool called PGP (Pretty Good Privacy) to communicate via email and Signal for encrypted texting and phone conversations. With your help, we can expose this behavior and stand up for the appropriate use of science in governmental policymaking.