

# Advocacy Avenues: Ways to Effectively Engage and Advocate against Injustices



## This happened...

## What change do you seek?

## What can you do?

## Where do you begin?

## What do you say?

**Someone has been the victim of police brutality**

An investigation and/or filing of criminal charges

Make phone calls and/or write letters and e-mails to the district attorney. To make the biggest impact, reach out to your personal network and coordinate your calls and letters. The more voices, the more impact.

If you are a victim of police brutality, you may be able to file a civil lawsuit and should promptly consult an attorney experienced in handling such cases (they often will review potential cases free of charge and take meritorious cases on a contingency fee basis).

The district attorney for the county where the incident took place has the authority to investigate and/or bring charges. Find the district/county attorney for the area. [www.commoncause.org/find-your-representative/addr/](http://www.commoncause.org/find-your-representative/addr/)

It may also be helpful to reach out to other government officials within the state or city, like the mayor, governor, state representatives, or even United States senators and representatives.

Introduce yourself, if you are a resident of the area or a constituent of that elected official, let them know. If the incident is not generally known or witnessed, describe the incident and feel free to share your anger or frustration. Say what you are asking the district attorney to do. For example: "Hi my name is Jane Doe. I am a resident of Minneapolis Minnesota, and I am outraged about the murder of George Floyd. I am calling on you Michael Freeman, as the Hennepin County Attorney, to immediately charge all four officers."

Administrative action (e.g. firing of police officer)

Same as above. In addition, you can write to or call the chief of police in charge of that specific officer or the elected county sheriff.

Determine where the police officer works. Next, look to public records or Google for the number to call and name of the person to ask for.

For the county sheriff: [www.commoncause.org/find-your-representative/addr/](http://www.commoncause.org/find-your-representative/addr/)

Same as above but ask for the administrative action you are seeking.

**Someone has been the victim of a violent crime committed by a citizen**

Criminal charges

If you witness the crime, dial 911 to report it. You can submit a police report to officers at the scene if possible, or afterwards via phone call or online with the local police department.

If you learn of the crime and are concerned that action has not been taken, you can advocate for action by reaching out to the district attorney's office and asking for an investigation and/or filing of formal charges (as described above).

If you are looking to report a crime or incident after the fact, start with the city or county where it took place, and then look to its website for where to file a report. Minneapolis: [www2.minneapolis.gov/police/report/eReport/Start\\_eReport](http://www2.minneapolis.gov/police/report/eReport/Start_eReport); St. Paul: [www.stpaul.gov/departments/police/file-police-report#:~:text=Police-,File%20a%20Police%20Report,number%20651%2D291%2D1111](http://www.stpaul.gov/departments/police/file-police-report#:~:text=Police-,File%20a%20Police%20Report,number%20651%2D291%2D1111).

You will be asked to describe details about who was involved and what happened. If you have any physical evidence or other evidence, you should provide it or include it in the report.

## This happened...

## What change do you seek?

## What can you do?

## Where do you begin?

## What do you say?

**You disagree with proposed legislation**

You do not want the legislation to be adopted or want it to be revised

Make phone calls and/or write letters and e-mails to your representatives to express your concerns. Be prepared to describe the issue and potential negative impact of the proposed legislation. To make the biggest impact, reach out to your personal network and coordinate your calls and letters. The more voices, the more impact.

The type of legislation will dictate who to contact. If it is state level, start with your local representatives in the State House of Representatives and Senate. If it is city level, contact your city council and your mayor. If it is federal legislation, contact your state senators and representatives.

You may not be able to speak directly to the representative or legislator on the phone, but in the case of your congressional representatives and US Senators, the member's staff will take note of your concern. Keep it brief, after introducing yourself, explain the reason for your call and your request. For example: "Please tell Senator Klobuchar to oppose the Mac Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021."

**You witnessed offensive or discriminatory conduct against someone in a public place**

You want to provide support

If you are present at the time and feel safe doing so, you can be an effective bystander and intervene.

This website provides great information as to how you can be an effective bystander if you see someone being harassed: [www.afsc.org/bystanderintervention](http://www.afsc.org/bystanderintervention)

Being a good bystander does not require you to say something to the harasser if you are not comfortable doing so. You can help the victim by asking them things such as "Would you like to walk with me over here?" "Would you like to move to another train?" And most importantly, "Are you okay?"

You want to raise awareness

If you are comfortable discussing the event publicly (and receiving responses and scrutiny that this might entail), you can post about it on social media. When a post or video goes "viral" there is an increased chance that legal action will be taken if the state has a relevant statute and/or that the harasser will be held publicly accountable.

You can use post on social media and use a popular or creative hashtag,

Your posts should always be factual and honest and should never encourage harm or violence to anyone. You can share your experiences with, or thoughts on, injustices. You can also demand accountability for the harasser. For example: "Today I saw a woman call the police on a Black woman who was reading a book in the park. #PacificParkPeggy #ExistingWhileBlack"

## This happened...

**You experienced discrimination in the workplace or in the job application process**

## What change do you seek?

You want to file a formal complaint with a government agency (this avenue is for the person who experienced the discrimination)

## What can you do?

The person experiencing discrimination can file a charge with a local, state, or federal anti-discrimination agency. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is a federal agency that administers and enforces civil rights laws against workplace discrimination. Most states and some localities have agencies that manage enforcement of anti-discrimination laws at the state and local level. For example, Minnesota has the Department of Human Rights, which enforces the Minnesota Human Rights Act. Minneapolis and St. Paul both have agency that enforce local ordinances aimed at preventing workplace discrimination. The Minnesota Human Rights Act allows individuals to file a lawsuit without first having to file a discrimination charge with an agency but federal law requires a discrimination charge be filed first. It might be prudent to consult an attorney experienced in handling such cases (they often will review potential cases free of charge and take meritorious cases on a contingency fee basis).

## Where do you begin?

Write down everything you can remember about the incident as soon as possible, including when it happened, who was involved, what was said/done, and any possible witnesses.

File a charge with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) or your state/local agency.

Quick action is crucial: Depending on the type of discrimination and whether it is also prohibited by state/local law, you must file a charge within a short period of time (as little as 180 days and as long as one year from the discriminatory incident). A charge may be filed in person, online, or by mail. Individuals may also file with states or local agencies. For more information on what to include in the charge, visit: [www.eeoc.gov/how-file-charge-employment-discrimination](http://www.eeoc.gov/how-file-charge-employment-discrimination)

To find the nearest Equal Employment Opportunity Commission office: [www.eeoc.gov/field-office](http://www.eeoc.gov/field-office). For more information on filing claims through the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission or with a state or local agency:

- EEOC: [www.eeoc.gov/filing-charge-discrimination](http://www.eeoc.gov/filing-charge-discrimination)
- Minnesota Department of Human Rights: [mn.gov/mdhr/intake/consultationinquiryform/](http://mn.gov/mdhr/intake/consultationinquiryform/)
- Minneapolis Department of Civil Rights: [www2.minneapolismn.gov/civilrights/complaint/WCMSP-190844](http://www2.minneapolismn.gov/civilrights/complaint/WCMSP-190844)
- Saint Paul Human Rights and Equal Economic Opportunity: [www.stpaul.gov/departments/human-rights-equal-economic-opportunity/human-rights/human-rights-intake-questionnaire](http://www.stpaul.gov/departments/human-rights-equal-economic-opportunity/human-rights/human-rights-intake-questionnaire)

## What do you say?

Your charge should include the following information:

- Your name, address, email, and telephone number
- The name, address, email, and telephone number of the employer (or employment agency or union) you want to file your charge against
- The number of employees employed there (if known)
- A short description of the actions you believe were discriminatory or retaliatory (for example, you were fired, demoted, harassed)
- When the discriminatory actions took place
- A factual description of what happened, why you believe you were discriminated or retaliated against, and on what legally protected basis (for example, under federal law, because of your race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, gender identity, and sexual orientation), national origin, age (40 or older), disability, genetic information). If you believe you were retaliated against for reporting or opposing discrimination, describe what happened and why you believe it was in retaliation for your actions.
- Your signature

## This happened...

**A coworker made general discriminatory remarks on social media**

## What change do you seek?

You want your employer to address it

## What can you do?

Raise the issue with your employer. Your employer can determine whether such conduct violates your employer's policies regarding social media or workplace harassment and whether disciplinary action or termination might be appropriate. A private-sector employee's comments (whether made in person or in writing on social media) are not shielded from employment consequences under the guise of freedom of speech.

## Where do you begin?

Screenshot or otherwise capture the post if possible. Bring the matter to your supervisor and/or human resources specialist's attention. You may need or be asked to make your complaint in writing and then follow up with an in-person meeting.

## What do you say?

Include evidence of the post in your written complaint and explain why you feel the social media post was discriminatory and how you feel about continuing to work with this person. If possible, reference any internal policies you believe the post violates.

Other legal action

If the remarks are targeted at you or a specific individual, you may have recourse under criminal stalking/harassment laws, civil defamation laws, and/or anti-discrimination laws.

Created by Elizabeth Jacobson, Emani Marshall-Loving, Claire Beyer and Asmah Tareen

**General Disclaimer:** This information is not meant as legal advice. You should consult with legal counsel about your particular situation.

**Main** 612.492.7000  
**Fax** 612.492.7077

**Address** 200 South Sixth Street, Suite 4000  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55402-1425

**Offices** USA / China / Mexico  
Minnesota, Iowa, North Dakota

**fredlaw.com**