

Creating a “Leave-Behind” for Legislators

If you secure a meeting with a local, state, or federal legislator or their staff, you’ll need to be able to deliver your message persuasively and succinctly. Legislative aides often cover wide-ranging portfolios and are fielding many constituent meetings in a given week, so leaving them with a concise one-page document that lays out your main arguments and asks can help your issue stay salient well after the meeting is over. Not surprisingly, these documents are often referred to as “leave-behinds.”

A leave-behind conveys the what, why, who, and how of your ask. It is meant to tell a story and serve as a clear call to action: What is the problem? What solution are you proposing, and why? Who is affected by the problem and your proposed solution? How can the legislator act right now to support the solution?

Remember That a “Leave-Behind” Should:

- Fit on one piece of paper (front and back)
- Be written in simple language. Keep in mind that this is not a presentation to subject experts; it is meant to be understandable to a legislative staff with a busy schedule and limited knowledge of your field.
- Make it as easy as possible for your legislator to take the action you’re recommending

- Include the following elements:

1. **Recommendation:** Articulate your policy recommendation in one sentence
 2. **Problem:** Present the problem you are trying to address, its scale, and impacts. Include specific information about the impacts people face in your legislator’s district; make it personal by describing how the problem has affected you or your community—the legislator’s constituents.
 3. **Analysis:** Support your recommendation with evidence. Draw on research, case studies, polling, and personal stories as appropriate.
 4. **“Ask”:** Call on your legislator to take an action that is specific, clear, and trackable (that is, will you be able to confirm that they took action?), and include any necessary information to make it as easy as possible for the legislator to complete the ask, such as bill name and number, relevant committee names or contact info, and a specific dollar amount for any budget appropriations.
- If relevant, name and briefly describe the organization you’re representing (e.g., a neighborhood association or local advocacy group). Include contact information so the staff can follow up with any additional questions.

See the example on the back to see this guidance in action, and [download our template here](#) to start drafting your own version.



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The United States Needs to Meet Its International Climate Finance Commitments

Recommendations for Congress

Support the US commitment to provide robust funding for international climate finance to help low-income countries cut their heat-trapping emissions, adapt to climate change, and cope with the inequities of loss and damage caused by climate change.

The world needs funding for clean energy and climate resilience

Communities and ecosystems around the world are being forced to contend with increasingly severe climate impacts—floods, heat waves, drought, wildfires, intense storms, and more—which are worsening as heat-trapping emissions rise. The science is clear: human-caused global warming is significantly increasing the odds of many extreme events, driving slow-onset disasters (e.g., sea level rise, ice sheet and glacier loss), and raising the risk of major climate tipping points.

In 2022, the toll was staggering, from devastating floods in Pakistan and China to a catastrophic ongoing drought in the Horn of Africa to record-breaking heat waves in India, Pakistan, and Europe. Climate change is not the sole causative factor. Maladaptive development patterns, political conflicts, structural racism, and unjust socioeconomic factors are also responsible for further jeopardizing people and property.

At the same time, we have a tremendous opportunity to help low-income nations make a just and equitable transition to clean energy and cut their heat-trapping emissions. The climate, public health, and economic benefits of this transition would be a huge boon, especially for communities currently struggling with high fossil energy costs, energy poverty, and pollution from fossil fuels.

The rising costs and human toll from climate impacts, as well as from our long-standing dependence on fossil fuels,

make clear that doing nothing is the most expensive and harmful choice. Smart and equitable investments in clean energy and climate resilience worldwide can help limit the costs of runaway climate change while also advancing fairer, healthier societies.

Funding for international climate finance is critical to help low-income countries address climate change, and will help maintain our country's global credibility and influence. In addition, more wealthy nations hold more responsibility; on a cumulative basis, for example, the United States alone is responsible for almost a quarter of the heat-trapping emissions fueling climate change. Meanwhile, people emitting a minuscule amount of emissions in low-income countries, such as Pakistan, Somalia, Peru, and Vanuatu, are bearing the brunt of extreme disasters.

In 2021, President Biden promised \$11.4 billion a year in climate finance by 2024 (a relatively small amount compared with the overall size of the US budget and the scale of urgent needs in many nations). So far, Congress has not appropriated anything close, and the December 2022 omnibus budget bill was deeply disappointing on this front. This inaction will worsen an already wide gap between the promise wealthy nations made to provide \$100 billion in financial assistance annually starting in 2020 and what has been distributed to date to countries on the front lines of the climate crisis. Our continued failure to deliver this funding will risk trust with global partners and create challenges for cooperation in other areas.

Congress has the power to support US commitment to climate finance

We urge Congress to push for as robust an appropriation as possible for international climate finance to show that the United States and the Biden administration intend to meet the president's pledge to deliver \$11.4 billion a year in international public climate finance by FY24.

“Low-income, climate vulnerable countries urgently need and deserve rapidly scaled-up and steady funding to help cut heat-trapping emissions, invest in clean energy and climate resilience, and address climate loss and damage.”

— Rachel Cleetus
UCS Climate Policy Director

Funding is especially needed for climate loss and damage

In addition to this specific request, it will be essential to address funding for climate loss and damage in forthcoming budget cycles. At the 2022 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27), the United States agreed to a historic decision to establish a loss and damage fund, particularly for nations most vulnerable to the climate crisis. Efforts are now under way to operationalize the fund in the next year.

The fund is expected to provide support to low-income countries facing climate extremes. The term loss and damage refers to the most severe of climate impacts, those human-caused and fossil fuel-driven disasters occurring with an intensity and frequency that far exceeds ordinary adaptation measures. Climate-caused loss and damage can be both economic (e.g., loss of land, homes, infrastructure) and noneconomic (e.g., loss of places of cultural importance), and it grievously compounds existing poverty and inequity, leaving those who have the fewest resources most affected.

Support international climate funding commitments

- **Include as robust an appropriation as possible for international climate finance in the upcoming budget.**
- **Consider signing our forthcoming "Dear Colleague" letter, which will contain specific appropriations funding requests.**
- **Address funding for loss and damage as the fund established at COP27 is operationalized.**

Please contact Todd Wolf at twolf@ucsusa.org if you have any questions.