



Walkout Field Guide

“Young people have helped lead all our great movements. How inspiring to see it again in so many **smart, fearless students standing up** for their right to be safe; marching and organizing to remake the world as it should be. We've been waiting for you. **And we've got your backs.”**

- Barack Obama

Sponsoring Organizations

**KEEP MOVING
NETWORK**



[Click here](#) to join the **Keep Moving Network**, a new group of student activists sharing strategies, resources, and opportunities.

Table Of Contents

Page 1:	Table of Contents and Introduction
Page 2:	10-Point Walkout Guide
Page 5:	Walkout Resources
Page 6:	<u>10-Week Legislative Guide Sample, Weeks 1-3</u>
Page 8:	Important Legislation to Support
Page 9:	Legislative Action Resources

Introduction

In the last few weeks, we have seen something extraordinary. Across America, high school students like you are taking action. America's high schoolers understand that **we are one community, one generation**, and **we will not stand idly by**. We will walk out because in Parkland, they had to run. We must make our voices heard because on the streets of Baltimore, Chicago, and others, countless voices have been silenced. Young people have been clamoring for change for a long time, especially in the marginalized communities hardest hit by gun violence. Finally, we are being heard. **Our generation will be remembered for its actions today, but it will be defined by what we do tomorrow.** Our vision for a safer future will light the way forward. **Let's get started!**

This walkout guide was written by a team of high school students like you, with diverse experiences in student activism and politics. We offer our perspective and knowledge on how to drum up support in classrooms and playing fields, how to work with administrations and attract local media, and **how to translate your energy into meaningful action**. In short, this guide will help you plan your walkout and keep moving.

Regardless of your level of experience or resources, you can find information to organize a successful demonstration in our **10-Point Walkout Guide**. We have sample interest forms, sign ideas, and press releases. Moreover, we have student experts whom you can contact for advice.

Walking out of the building, however, is not the last step. Alone, a walkout will not make a difference. That is why we must **keep moving**. Using our **10-Week Legislative Guide** program, you and your peers will learn how to write letters, make calls, and meet with your elected officials. Sustained commitments made by high school teams across the state can make a real difference. We must show our government that our passion is backed by expertise, and that our passion is unrelenting.

10-Point Walkout Guide

Created By High School Students, for High School Students

1. Assemble a team.

- a. Pull leaders from everywhere. Go to student government, clubs, and students from every grade and every possible background. You need to reach every class, social group, and community.

2. Assess your administration. Do NOT approach them at this point.

- a. Determine if your school would be receptive to cooperating with your team. If they would not be receptive, ensure that you have maximized your numbers among students and teachers to avoid suspensions or other consequences.
- b. Open a dialogue **after collecting student interest** (See Step #4), and try to get their approval for your walkout. Even an unfriendly administration will respond to overwhelming numbers.

3. Decide when to walk out and how to use your time.

- a. Options for a successful walkout include, but are not limited to, protesting with signs (if this happens, plan a signmaking day), die/lie-ins (props?), students giving speeches, having a moment of silence, or any combination thereof.
- b. **17-minute national walkout at 10:00 AM on March 14**, as well as another date on **April 20th**. Pick whichever is better for you. If neither are possible, just pick your own date.
- c. Consider your school community. Are there going to be a lot of hecklers? Enthusiastic supporters?

4. Collect student interest.

- a. Track how many people are interested with a Google Form.
- b. Some students will be afraid of signing on, afraid of punishment. Remind them that this is an INTEREST FORM to show the administration, nothing concrete.
- c. Ways to spread the word: social media, mass emails, etc. One very effective way is to copy/paste a link to the Google Form with a quick explanation and text it to every contact you have.
- d. Administrations will take you ***much more seriously*** if you have at least 100 students who have indicated interest on the Google Form.

5. Communicate with teachers.

- a. **Teachers and administrations, legally, cannot condone or encourage a walkout.** What they can do, however, is help to make your event run safely and smoothly.
 - i. BAD: “Hey Ms. Feldman, encourage your class to walkout.”
 - ii. GOOD: “Mr. Craig, we’ll be walking out on Wednesday, so it might be a good idea to change the date of the test.”

6. Approach the administration.

- a. Schedule a meeting between your leadership team and the administration. Approach them respectfully.
- b. This is a national movement with students across the country planning walkouts regardless of their administration’s support.
- c. Know your rights - [Click here to learn more.](#)
- d. If they have concerns about safety or other issues, listen to them. Remember, **the administration is not your enemy.**
- e. **Safety concerns are legitimate.** Keeping the walkout on the football field or in the halls can help address them.

7. Invite the press.

- a. Send a press release (sample below) to local affiliates such as your school newspaper, Wicked Local, and The Globe Regional. Locate contact information online, or find your local newspaper [here](#).
- b. Find newspapers and TV stations on the Internet and contact them.

8. Determine location and make final preparations.

- a. Football field: Press access while still being on school grounds.
- b. Cafeteria/Gym: Useful for bad weather, administration concerned about safety. You’ll need administrative permission for the press.
- c. Front entrance: Optimal for press coverage.
- d. **Email your registered contacts about a signmaking day** (at school, at a house, wherever) the day before the March. Signmaking is a way to get the word out.
- e. If you can, **obtain a megaphone.** If you need to purchase one, they cost about \$20.

9. Hold the Walkout event.

- a. If you can, get an announcement on the PA system. “It’s starting now.” This can help make sure people remember to go.
- b. **Register and pre-register voters** (how-to guide below).
- c. On the day of the event, announce that this is the beginning of **Week 1 of our Legislative Action Plan**. If you have speakers at the event, then make sure the Legislative Action Plan is mentioned by the last speaker. “We’ll be writing letters to Congress in Ms. Smith’s room after school!” “Everyone should come!”
- d. Be careful how you respond to hecklers. You don’t need to engage with them at all. If you do, remember that empathy, not scoring points, is the key to persuasion.

10. Keep the momentum going.

Walking out is easy. Staying moving is harder. Sustained commitments are the key to real change. **To retain the most people, you should begin the next steps on the same day as the walkout.**

The [10-Week Legislative Action Guide](#) offers a simple 10-week action plan to ensure that you and your team can make a real difference. If you can get 50 people to come in after school on the day of the walkout, and 20 people the week after that, and even 10 people in subsequent weeks, you have enough to make a change. This campaign centers around four distinct goals:

- **Advocate** for gun reform legislation.
- **Educate** participants about gun reform and how to affect change.
- **Register** more voters to make change.
- **Elect** leaders who will be accountable to the American people.

Using this plan will amplify your effect, because **you will be joining many other high school teams** working for the same campaign.

[Click here](#) to connect with the **Keep Moving Network** of high school activists. We are going to link together leaders like you across the state to share stories and strategies. As a community, we will have access to more resources, personpower, and the latest news and strategies.

Walkout Resources:

The samples and templates you need to get going.

[Click here](#) for a Sample Google Form

[Click here](#) for a Sample Press Release

Sign Ideas - If you want for any further inspiration, simply look up the signs used at marches that have already taken place. A signmaking day is great.

- “Are We Next?”
- “No More Weapons Of War”
- “Enough is Enough”

Contacts for Student Leaders

Mia Flowers, Western Mass - flowers19@nmhschool.org

Michael Baick, Western Mass - mbaick@hsdems.org

Jackson Humphreys, Central Mass - carlton99049@gmail.com

Zev Dickstein, Greater Boston - zdickstein@hsdems.org

March 24th March for Our Lives:

Sign Up to march on March 24th. Find the closest march to you, [here](#).

10-Week Legislative Guide Weeks 1-3

Created By High School Students, for High School Students

NOTE: Most week plans should take fewer than 20 minutes.

Week 1: Getting Started

Organize or participate in a walkout at your school on March 14. During the walkout, **register and pre-register voters (how-to below)**. At the end of the walkout, **announce to the assembled students** that you will be meeting after school (cafeteria, seminar, with a club) to **write letters or emails to your U.S Senators in support of common-sense gun reform**.

Your team could be 5 people, or it could be 100. Interest is extremely high.

If you want to point to specific legislation or have never written your elected representatives before, refer to our legislation and letter-writing guide below. Be sure to have enough pencils, paper, envelopes, and stamps for everyone. Ideally, everyone can seal and address their own envelopes. **Remind everyone there will be a meeting next week** at the same time.

Why we write - Even though our U.S Senators are strong voices for gun reform, it is still important to remind them how much constituents care about this issue. Sometimes, elected officials will read letters aloud on the Congress floor. Each letter should be unique. Handwritten letters show more effort.

Week 2: Calling and Marching

Meet again at the same time and place. Now, it's time to make a call. This time, contact your **US Congressperson**. On Saturday, March 24th, [attend a March for our Lives rally near you](#).

Guide to calling elected officials and a list of relevant bills is below.

Why we call - Now that you have written letters, you have a basic idea of how to communicate your ideas. Even if you're just leaving a message that is only

listened to by a staffer, hearing the voice of dozens of high schoolers (remember, this is happening statewide) has an especially powerful impact.

Week 3: Taking it Face-To-Face

Hold a *reflection session* to learn what students thought of the March, the walkout, and the calls you made. Then, discuss moving to the next level of action: **a face-to-face meeting with your state representative.**

Email your state representative to arrange a meeting to discuss gun reform. It would be excellent if they could come to your high school, but going to their office would work, too. Schedule a convenient date and time. For assistance with setting up a meeting, or tips and info about the meeting itself, do not hesitate to contact student expert Dan Bryan, at dbryan@hsdems.org.

Why we meet - Whether you meet with a staffer or the representative themselves, there is no better way to demonstrate your level of commitment and interest than showing up in person. Writing, then calling, has prepared you to be ready for this.

[See Weeks 4-9 Here!](#)

Week 10 and Beyond: Persist

You have the tools to make a difference. Figure out how to use them in any issue you can find.

Call one more meeting. If you want to keep up work like this, [click here](#) to join the **Keep Moving Network** of high school activists, who helped create this guide. We are going to link together leaders like you across the state to share stories and strategies. As a community, we will have access to more resources, personpower, and the latest news and strategies.

Get involved in the 2018 elections - Not every politician will listen, no matter how hard you try. Furthermore, gun reform is not the only critical issue on the table. Contact our high school leaders for opportunities to get involved in the midterms.

Important Legislation to Support

Educate yourself on the fight for gun reform.

Massachusetts

[H.3610](#) An act temporarily preventing firearm access for extremely dangerous or suicidal individuals. Establishes a civil procedure for removing guns from people who present high risk or danger to themselves or others. Read more [here](#).

Nationwide

[S.2135](#) Fix NICS Act: Many agencies consistently fail to report criminal records to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System, and this bill would increase enforcement of the rule and give states financial incentives to report. Read more [here](#).

[S.2009](#) Background Check Expansion Act: Senator Chris Murphy who has been outspoken on gun reform since the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in 2012, introduced the Background Check Expansion Act in October, in the weeks following the Las Vegas shooting. The legislation would amend a section of federal law to require a background check for every gun sale, otherwise known as "universal background checks". Nearly all American voters — 97 percent — support universal background checks, according to a Quinnipiac poll. Read more [here](#).

Other Nationwide Issues (no specific legislation yet)

Ban bump stocks, which turn semi-automatic weapons into fully automatic ones. Used by the shooter in Vegas.

Reinstate an improved assault weapons ban. Since the expiration of the assault weapons ban implemented by President Clinton in 1994, mass shootings have skyrocketed. Be sure to understand the [definition of "assault weapon."](#) There is no one unified term, but in general, "assault weapon" connotes a weapon of war. The AR-15, for example, is a civilian version of the military M-16.

Raise the age of possession for certain firearms to 21.

Legislative Action How-To

The tools you'll need to make a difference.

Voter Registration:

The best way to elect politicians who support gun reform is by registering more people to vote!

1. **Learn the basics about voter pre-registration and registration.** In order to pre-register to vote, you have to be between 16 and 18 years old. To register to vote, you have to be at least 18 years old.
2. **Talk to your school administration, and find a date and time.** It would be important to talk to your school administration and work with them to find a good time, date and location for you to host your drive. It's important, especially with unfriendly administrations, to stress that your efforts are nonpartisan. Models that have been successful include: first period/home room, lunch hour, at the end of the school day, assembly.
3. **Learn How to Register Voters.** Visit <https://www.sec.state.ma.us/ovr/> to learn about mail-in voter registration forms. A sample form is included on the back of this page. Alternatively, you can do **online registration!** All you need to register someone online is their learner's permit or driver's license! **Use tinyurl.com/mavoter to get anyone to the registration site instantly.**
4. You can find more information and resources [here](#).

Legislative Action How-To

The tools you'll need to make a difference.

Calling legislators:

1. Click [this link](#) to go to the MA Legislature page where you can easily search information on each legislator, including email and phone number.
2. Before you call, familiarize yourself with the bill you are supporting. Be sure to familiarize yourself with several talking points.
3. On the call there are a few things you must be sure to say.
 - a. Introduce yourself by name and say that you are a high school student.
 - b. Tell the staffer who answers or leave a message saying that you want the Senator or Representative to support the bill you are calling about.
 - c. List a few benefits of the bill. Mention how it affects you as a student.
 - d. Thank them for their time

If you want to write (on paper or email):

1. Click on [this link](#). You can do as few or as many legislators as you like. The link will bring you to the MA legislature page where you can easily search information on each Representative or Senator. This is where you will find their office address.
2. Before you call, familiarize yourself with the bill you are supporting. Be sure to familiarize yourself with several talking points.
3. In the letter, there are a few things that you must include.
 - a. Be sure to use the correct statehouse address. List your name and address as the return address.
 - b. Introduce yourself by name and say that you are a high school student.
 - c. Ask politely that the legislator supports the bill you are writing about.
 - d. List a few benefits of the bill. Mention how it specifically affects you as a student. Make a personal appeal. Anyone can talk about a bill. No one has a story quite like yours.
 - e. Thank them for their time and sign the letter.

Meeting with a legislator

1. Understand the bill. It can be helpful to actually dig into the text.
2. Figure out who represents you in Congress and the State Legislature. You may end up meeting with staffers instead of legislators, but don't be disheartened.
3. Take the next step and meet with them. If you already have a relationship with your legislator, or if you do not already have a relationship with this legislator, this will be an important introduction for you and other students.
4. Use the Internet to find the office hours of their district or state house office. Information can be found [here](#) (MA Legislature), or [here](#) (US Congress). Contact the Senator or Representative's staff. Sample meeting request forms can be found below.
5. Schedule a time to come into the office to meet with your representative. Bring a large team if you can. You will be at the State House, a district office, or a mutually agreed upon location like your school, a restaurant or a library.
6. Remember to be respectful and polite. The best way to make people listen is to prove that you're knowledgeable and passionate, not rude!
7. Do not be dismayed if nothing happens immediately. Every little bit counts!
8. Consider posting, sharing, tweeting, etc about your visit. Be sure to take pictures and send them to others on the Keep Moving Network.

Sample Letter to Legislator

Hello Senator Chang-Diaz,

My name is Daniel Bryan and I am a 11th grade student at Boston Latin School.

Our current legislative priority is H.2016, An act to promote and enhance civic engagement. As such, we are organizing meetings with legislators, making calls, writing letters and submitting testimony as part of a campaign in support of the bill. We believe it is a crucial step towards mending a broken civics education system in Massachusetts and across the country.

You represent many of the members of my chapter at Boston Latin School and as a member of the Joint Committee on Education, where H.2016 is currently referred, we were wondering if it would be possible to set up a brief meeting with you or your staff to discuss H.2016. It would also be a great opportunity for us to establish a relationship with our State Senator.

Thank you very much for your consideration!

Best,

-Daniel Bryan
Junior, Boston Latin School

Sample Talking Points

Find sample talking points in our legislative field guide, [here](#).