

Grassroots Lobbying Guide: Immigration & DHS Oversight (Minnesota-Focused)

Introduction: Recent events in Minnesota – including a fatal ICE operation in Minneapolis – have highlighted the urgent need for public oversight of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) agencies (ICE and CBP). When DHS agents operate with aggression or misconduct, *grassroots lobbying* can pressure officials to act. This guide provides a step-by-step approach for Minnesotans (and concerned citizens elsewhere) to organize and demand accountability. We'll cover how to set a clear goal, build a team, document abuses safely, turn incidents into concrete asks, and use every advocacy tool (calls, meetings, press, etc.) to get results. Throughout, we include examples (like the Minneapolis case) and practical templates so you can take immediate action.

1. Define a Clear Advocacy Goal

Begin by **setting a specific goal** for your immigration-related campaign. A clear goal focuses your efforts and lets others rally behind a common cause. Make sure the goal is **SMART: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timed** ¹. For example, instead of a vague aim like "improve DHS accountability," define something concrete such as *"Push Senator [Name] to introduce an oversight amendment by the end of this session that mandates investigations of ICE use-of-force incidents."* A sharp focus helps map out strategy and measure success ¹.

- **Be Specific:** Identify the exact change or action you want. (E.g. "Get a congressional hearing on conditions at Sherburne County ICE detention.") Specificity clarifies what success looks like.
- **Ensure Impact:** Choose a goal that is meaningful and *strategic*. Ask yourself how achieving it will protect immigrant rights or increase oversight. For instance, demanding *"DHS release bodycam footage of the Minneapolis ICE shooting"* is specific *and* builds pressure for transparency.
- **Make it Seeable:** The goal should yield observable results so you can hold officials accountable ². "Senator X sends a public oversight letter to DHS" is seeable – you can verify if the letter was sent. In contrast, "Senator X cares about immigrants more" is too abstract.

By defining a clear, actionable objective, you give your team a target to organize around and a way to know when you've achieved a win.

2. Structure a Small (but Scalable) Grassroots Team

You don't need a large organization to start – a **dedicated core group** can drive a campaign. Begin by gathering a few committed individuals who care deeply about the issue ³. Within this team, **assign roles** based on each person's strengths ³. For example: one person coordinates research and incident documentation, another handles communications (social media, press outreach), another liaises with public officials, etc. This defined structure will help avoid confusion and burnout, even if you're informally organized.

- **Establish Communication:** Set up a reliable way for the team to communicate (group chat, email list, regular meet-ups). Consistent check-ins keep everyone on the same page about tasks and progress.

- **Shared Purpose & Trust:** Take time to align on values and goals. Make sure everyone understands the mission (from Section 1) and feels heard. A foundation of trust and shared purpose will make the group resilient ³.
- **Start Small, Think Scalable:** Tackle what your small team can manage first – e.g. documenting a few local incidents or arranging one meeting with a representative. As you gain traction, have a plan to **scale up**: recruit volunteers for specific actions (phone banks, rally turnout), or form sub-teams (e.g. a research committee, a media team) as more people join. Keep leadership **horizontal and inclusive** so new members can step up without bureaucracy.
- **Build Partnerships:** Even as a small group, you can amplify impact by partnering with local organizations. In Minnesota, for example, groups like the Immigrant Law Center or MIRAC might lend expertise or people-power. Connect with faith groups, student organizations, or civil liberties groups who support immigrant rights – these coalitions can share resources and legitimize your efforts ⁴.

Remember: even a handful of determined people can spark change. Many successful campaigns begin with a tiny “inner circle” that inspires others. By structuring your team early, you create a core that can grow without losing effectiveness.

3. Document DHS/ICE Misconduct Safely and Credibly

Accurate, firsthand documentation of abuses is powerful fuel for your advocacy. Whether it's an ICE raid, a detention abuse, or an incident like the Minneapolis shooting, recording what happened allows you to prove misconduct and counter official denials. *However, safety and credibility are paramount.* Here's how to document incidents effectively:

- **Collect Evidence (Video, Photos, Notes):** If you witness a DHS operation or abuse, and it's safe to do so, *document it*. Video can expose human rights abuses and serve as concrete evidence ⁵. Indeed, in the Minneapolis case, **video evidence and on-the-ground witness accounts proved crucial** – they directly contradicted DHS's initial statements about the shooting ⁶. Always film **from a safe distance** and without interfering with officers. (There is generally no law against filming law enforcement in public spaces; even Minnesota's governor has urged residents to lawfully record federal agents as a way to hold ICE accountable ⁷.) If video isn't possible, take clear photos or immediately write down detailed notes (date, time, location, badge numbers, what was said/done). These records strengthen the credibility of your claims.
- **Ensure Safety and Consent:** Protect the *people* in your documentation. If immigrants or bystanders are in your photos/videos, consider blurring faces or avoiding identifying details, especially if they are vulnerable (undocumented, survivors of violence, etc.). *Ethical documenting* means weighing risks: **“If footage isn't captured safely and ethically, it can put people at risk.”**⁵ **Before sharing someone's story or images publicly, get their consent when possible.** Minnesota's sanctuary policies affirm that observers have a right to document enforcement ⁸, but also remember that publicly identifying someone could draw unwanted attention. When in doubt, consult with advocacy groups on how to share testimonies anonymously (e.g. using aliases or aggregate data). Your goal is to shine light on abuse without** causing retaliation against victims or witnesses.
- **Verify and Corroborate:** False or unverified claims can undermine your cause. Take time to *confirm key facts*. Cross-check stories with other witnesses, and look for any available third-party reports (news articles, 911 logs, etc.). **Don't rely on rumors.** For instance, if you see a social media post about an ICE raid, try to verify it before amplifying – tools exist to help activists **distinguish real reports from misinformation** about ICE operations ⁹. Whenever possible,

back up your documentation with multiple sources: a video + a witness affidavit + a news report is a powerful combination that officials will find hard to dismiss.

- **Log Incidents Systematically:** Maintain a secure **incident log** of every DHS/ICE misconduct case your team learns about. Include dates, locations (e.g. “Nov 5: ICE arrest at Lake Street, Minneapolis”), description of what occurred, and available evidence (videos, names of witnesses). This running log not only helps you track patterns, it can be shared (carefully) with journalists or legislators to demonstrate a *pattern of abuse*. It’s essentially your community’s “dossier” on DHS misbehavior. *Tip:* Also encourage community members to report incidents to official complaint channels – **anyone can file complaints with DHS’s Offices of Professional Responsibility (OPR)** and Inspector General, and while responses may vary, **each complaint creates a paper trail** of alleged abuse ¹⁰. (In fact, DHS is required to log and review such complaints, which can later support oversight hearings.)
- **Use Hotlines and Allies:** Know that you’re not alone in documenting. Many immigrant advocacy coalitions have reporting hotlines or apps. For example, in Illinois there’s a hotline to report ICE activity ¹¹; in Minnesota, community orgs or the ACLU may have similar channels. These networks can help **collect stories safely**, provide legal guidance, or dispatch trained observers. If an incident is especially egregious (e.g. an ICE agent uses force), consider reaching out to civil rights attorneys – documentation combined with legal action can really turn up the heat on DHS.

By gathering credible evidence and safeguarding those involved, you build the foundation for impactful advocacy. Detailed incident documentation turns abstract complaints into undeniable facts that officials **must** address.

4. Convert Incidents into Effective Congressional “Asks”

Documenting abuses is only step one – the next step is to **press decision-makers to act** on that information. This means translating your evidence into concrete **“asks”** for lawmakers or other officials. An *ask* is a specific action you want a public official to take. Here’s how to craft effective asks from incidents, and particularly how to target Congress for DHS oversight:

- **Be Specific and Action-Oriented:** Frame each ask around a **single, clear action** related to the incident. Generic pleas (“Do something about ICE!”) won’t stick. Instead, pinpoint what you want done: e.g., *“We urge you to hold a House hearing on the October 30 ICE shooting in Minneapolis”* or *“Please send a letter to DHS demanding an investigation into mistreatment of detainees at Sherburne County Jail.”* The more specific, the better ¹². If possible, tie it to a timeframe (“...within the next month”) or an existing mechanism (“...via the House Oversight Committee”). Officials are more likely to respond when it’s clear *what* they need to do.
- **Match the Ask to the Official’s Power:** Different officials have different tools. Make sure you’re asking the *right person* for the *right thing*. For a member of Congress, prime tools include: **using oversight authority (investigations, subpoenas), writing formal letters to DHS leaders, co-sponsoring or introducing legislation, making public statements, or calling for votes** on relevant bills ¹². For example, if you provide evidence of ICE misconduct, a Representative on an oversight committee could *request a DHS Inspector General investigation* or *introduce an amendment to restrict ICE funding pending answers*. In Minnesota’s case, after the ICE shooting, **Senator Amy Klobuchar immediately called for full transparency and an investigation** into what happened ¹³ – that’s an example of a timely, appropriate ask (demanding an inquiry). On

the other hand, if you're dealing with a local county sheriff who cooperates with ICE, your ask might be "stop honoring ICE detainer requests" – something *that* official controls, not Congress.

- **Use Incidents as Leverage for Oversight:** Incidents, especially shocking ones, can galvanize officials – use that! Whenever DHS or ICE misconduct harms someone in your community, **cite the incident as a reason** the official must act. For instance: *"After the recent incident where U.S. citizens documenting ICE were unlawfully detained, we ask you to intervene."* In fact, elected officials often respond to constituent tragedies. Provide them the story (with evidence) and link it to your ask. Example: *"On Oct 23, ICE agents in Minneapolis detained two U.S. citizens who were bystanders, violating their rights. Rep. __, will you write to DHS and DOJ demanding those agents be investigated and removed from duty?"* This approach worked in Minnesota – **Governor Walz sent a letter to DHS after multiple wrongful ICE arrests of residents, urging that agents be reviewed and put on leave** ¹⁴. His letter explicitly listed demands: review the incidents, clarify the law on citizen observers, retrain ICE agents on civil rights ¹⁴. Those were *specific asks* to DHS prompted by incidents. Your job as an advocate is to prompt *your* officials to make similar concrete demands.
- **Propose Oversight Actions:** Sometimes officials need ideas. Don't be shy about suggesting the form of oversight. Depending on the situation, you might ask for: an **oversight hearing** (spotlighting the issue in Congress), a **formal inquiry or investigation** (by the DHS Inspector General or a congressional committee), a **public statement or press conference** condemning the misconduct, or even legislative action (like support for a bill to curb abuses). For example, after an ICE shooting, you could say, *"Congresswoman __, will you hold a press briefing and call on DHS to release the names of the officers involved and all footage of the incident?"* – this is modeled on steps Members of Congress can take ¹⁵. Indeed, **public calls to action by Members can lead to real results** – we've seen cases where congressional pressure got ICE to reunite separated families or release detainees ¹⁶. Outline the outcome you seek (releases, suspensions, policy changes) and which lever the official should pull.
- **Make It Constituent-Focused:** When communicating the ask, emphasize how the issue affects *their constituents/community*. E.g., *"Families in our Minneapolis neighborhood fear cooperating with police because of ICE's actions – we need you to restore trust by demanding accountability."* Officials, especially members of Congress, are responsive when they see an issue is directly impacting people they represent ¹⁶. If you have multiple incidents, even better: *"In the past month, there have been three incidents in Minnesota of ICE agents using excessive force. This pattern calls for your oversight."* Attaching numbers or patterns can prompt an official to realize it's not an isolated case but a systemic problem.

Finally, **get a commitment** whenever possible. In meetings or town halls (discussed below), politely press the official: "Will you do this, yes or no?" If they hedge, ask what information they need to decide – and offer to follow up with that info. By converting raw incidents into targeted asks, you turn painful stories into actionable oversight steps.

5. Use Multiple Lobbying Channels: Calls, Emails, Meetings, Press & Social Media

To maximize pressure on DHS and its overseers, **engage through every available channel**. Different advocacy “tools” can complement each other. For example, a tweet might amplify a message that you delivered in a phone call. Below is a breakdown of key lobbying tools and how to use them effectively:

- **Phone Calls:** Calling your elected officials’ offices is one of the **most effective** ways for constituents to be heard ¹⁷. A flood of phone calls signals an issue’s urgency in a way emails might not. When you call, ask to speak to the staffer who handles immigration or homeland security issues if possible. Introduce yourself as a constituent (give your zip code) and state your ask briefly (see Section 6 for a script). Expect to talk to an aide – that’s normal, and they do relay messages. *Pro tip:* Be polite and to the point (calls are usually 2–3 minutes). If the staffer engages, be ready to mention the incident or data backing your concern. Also, **call at all levels:** your U.S. Senators and Representative (federal level), but also state officials if relevant (Governor’s office, state legislators) and even local offices if your ask is local. Consistent calls, especially organized as call-in campaigns, can push an issue onto an official’s radar. (In Minnesota, constituents bombarding offices after the ICE shooting surely contributed to the swift statements by officials.)
- **Emails and Letters:** Written messages (emails or mailed letters) allow you to provide more detail or attach evidence. However, note that **officials receive thousands of emails weekly**, so an individual email can get lost ¹⁸. To make yours stand out: **personalize it** (cookie-cutter form letters have less impact), **state you are a constituent upfront**, and keep it concise. Use a clear subject line (e.g. “Constituent request: Investigate ICE misconduct in MN”) ¹⁹. In the first lines, identify yourself and your key ask. You can include a brief story or fact in the body to illustrate why action is needed. If you have a supporting document (e.g. a fact-sheet of recent incidents, or a news article), mention it or attach it. Always **include your name and address** – offices often prioritize messages from their district ²⁰ ²¹. *Tip:* Consider sending copies to relevant staffers directly if you can find their emails (for example, the immigration aide). Lastly, **physical letters** can be impactful for state/local officials or if you’re delivering a petition, but in Congress physical mail is slow (due to security screening) ²². If timing is critical, stick to emails or fax for D.C. offices. In summary, use email/letters to provide thoughtful, well-documented appeals, but if you want volume impact, coordinate a larger email campaign or follow up with a call to ensure it’s seen ¹⁸.
- **In-Person Meetings:** *Face time* with officials or their staff is incredibly valuable. An in-person meeting (or virtual meeting/Zoom in today’s world) allows for dialogue and making a personal connection. **Schedule a meeting** with your U.S. Representative’s district office staff or your Senators’ state office staff – you can usually request one on their website or by calling the office and asking for the scheduler. Prepare a small delegation (2–4 constituents is great) and decide who will say what (e.g. one person shares a personal story of an ICE raid, another presents the specific ask). Bring a one-page handout summarizing your points and incident data to leave behind. *Meetings are where you can really shine a light on DHS abuses*. For example, a Minneapolis family affected by the recent ICE shooting could meet with Senator Klobuchar’s staff to share their experience directly – that first-hand testimony can move officials to act. **Town halls** and public forums are another venue: if your official hosts a town hall, attend and ask your question in front of the audience (this puts extra public pressure). Remember, **in-person appeals have high impact** – officials often cite meetings or encounters when they later take action (“I met with constituents who were affected...”). According to advocacy experts, personal visits tend to leave a

strong, lasting impression ²³ ¹⁷ . Always be respectful and thank the official or staff for their time, even if they are not immediately supportive – building a cordial relationship can pay off in follow-up interactions.

- **Media & Press Outreach:** Don't underestimate the power of *publicity* in lobbying. Getting media attention for your cause can amplify pressure on DHS and on elected officials. There are several ways to do this:
 - **Press Conferences/Events:** Organize a press event after a major incident or to launch your campaign. For example, community leaders and affected individuals might hold a press conference in Minneapolis calling for ICE accountability. Invite local news outlets (TV, newspaper, radio) and prepare a few key people to speak (keep statements brief and impactful, focusing on your ask). Visuals help – e.g. signs (“Justice for ____”) or a backdrop of community supporters. The goal is to generate news coverage that will reach officials and the broader public.
 - **Press Releases:** Write a short press release to send to media – announce your group's demand (e.g. “Residents Call on Congress to Investigate ICE Shooting in Minnesota”) and include quotes from organizers or experts. This can lead to reporters contacting you for more info.
 - **Op-Eds and Letters to the Editor:** These are great for shaping public narrative. A well-placed op-ed in the *Star Tribune* or a letter in a local paper can call out DHS misconduct and mention which officials need to act. Public officials *do* monitor local media in their district/state. If, for instance, a letter to the editor praises Governor Walz for defending immigrant rights or presses Senator __ to do more, it grabs their attention. It also signals community support.
 - **Leverage Journalism:** Provide journalists with your documentation and stories. Sometimes media investigations prod officials where private lobbying hasn't. For example, if you've logged multiple ICE abuses, consider sharing that dossier with a reporter. A news exposé or TV segment on “ICE abuses in Minnesota” will put DHS on the defensive and give your elected allies more cover to speak out. Always ensure anonymity where needed and coordinate with legal counsel if any victims are in active cases.

Engaging the press creates a public record and a sense of urgency. DHS and politicians alike *dislike bad press*, so use that to your advantage to drive home your oversight demands.

- **Social Media & Digital Campaigns:** Social platforms can dramatically extend your reach. Use **Twitter/X, Facebook, Instagram, or other platforms** to broadcast your message and directly target officials. Tactics:
 - **Publicly tag officials** with concise, respectful messages about your ask. (E.g. a tweet: “.@SenTinaSmith Please stand with MN immigrants – demand DHS investigate ICE misconduct after #MinneapolisShooting. We need accountability now.”) If lots of constituents post or tweet similar calls using a hashtag, it creates an impression of widespread support.
 - **Share videos/photos** from documented incidents (ensuring privacy considerations) to raise awareness. A clip of an incident can go viral and build public outrage, compelling officials to respond. Always add context and your call to action in the post.
 - **Use Hashtags & Coalitions:** Create a campaign hashtag like **#EyesOnICE** or **#MNforImmigrantJustice** to unify posts. Join forces with national movements (e.g. **#AbolishICE** was a trend) to give your local issue a larger platform. Twitter “storms” or coordinated posting times can trend your issue regionally.
 - **Online Petitions and Email Blasts:** Platforms like Change.org or organizational CRM tools allow you to gather petition signatures and email them to targets. While a petition alone may not force change, it's another data point (“X thousand Minnesotans signed this”) and is useful for rallying supporters who might then take other actions.

- **Storytelling:** Social media is also where you can humanize the issue. Share real stories (with permission) of families affected by DHS abuses, or videos of community members asking for justice. This builds public empathy and counters any DHS narrative. For example, posting a short video of a local veteran speaking about how ICE detained his U.S. citizen friend by mistake can be very compelling.

In summary, **meet officials in every arena:** flood their offices with calls and emails, meet them in person when possible, get your cause in the news, and keep the conversation alive online. A multi-pronged approach creates an echo chamber of pressure. Your officials will hear about the issue from you directly, see it in the news, and notice it trending among constituents – a powerful combination that increases the likelihood of a response.

6. Templates and Scripts for Outreach

Having a script or template boosts your confidence and ensures your message is clear. Below are example scripts for calling, emailing, and speaking out – customize them to fit your situation (especially the parts in brackets).

A. Phone Call Script (to a Congressional Office):

Caller: Hello, my name is [Your Name] and I’m a constituent from [City], Minnesota (ZIP [#####]) ²⁰. I’m calling about the recent [issue/incident] – specifically, [1-2 words description, e.g. “ICE shooting in Minneapolis” or “ICE detention abuses”]. I am very concerned about this because [one brief personal reason or fact: e.g. “my community witnessed an ICE raid that went wrong”].

Staffer: [They will likely acknowledge and perhaps offer a generic response.]

Caller: I am **asking** [Senator/Representative __] to **[take a specific action]** in response. Specifically, I’d like [her/him] to [support/introduce/do **X**]. For example, [“urge DHS for a full investigation and publicly share the findings” or “co-sponsor the Dignity for Detained Immigrants Act”]. This action is important to me and many Minnesotans – it will help ensure accountability. Will the [Senator/Rep] consider this? ²

Staffer: [Might give a non-committal answer like “I’ll pass it along.”]

Caller: Thank you. Please take down my contact info so you can let me know where [Senator/Rep] stands on this ²⁴ ²⁵. I appreciate your time.

Caller tips: Speak calmly and clearly. If the staffer mentions a position (“The Senator has called for an investigation”), you can thank them and reinforce why it matters to follow through. If the staffer seems unaware of the issue, offer to send them information via email (and then be sure to do so). Always end politely, and *do* ask for a response – it signals that you expect follow-up, not just venting.

B. Email/Letter Template (to an elected official):

Subject: Constituent Request – Oversight of DHS/ICE [Issue]

Dear [Senator/Representative][Last Name],

My name is [Your Name] and I live in [City/Town] in your [state/district]. I’m writing to urge you to take action regarding [brief description of issue, e.g. “the recent ICE shooting of a Minnesota resident” or “reports of abusive conditions in ICE detention”].

[In 1-2 sentences, describe the situation and why it's alarming: e.g. "On January 7, an ICE agent fatally shot a 37-year-old woman in Minneapolis under disputed circumstances. Video evidence ⁶ suggests the official account is misleading, and our community is shaken and seeking answers."]

I respectfully **ask** that you [what you want them to do - be specific]:

- **[If emailing Senator:]** "use your oversight role to demand a full, independent investigation by DHS into this incident and ensure the findings are made public,"
- **[If emailing Representative:]** "publicly request a Homeland Security Committee hearing on ICE's use-of-force policies,"
- or **"issue a statement pressuring DHS for accountability,"** etc.

This action will help protect the rights and safety of people in Minnesota. *(If you have personal stakes or expertise, mention briefly: e.g. "As a volunteer with a local refugee support group, I've seen families live in fear of these raids.")*

I've attached [or "I can provide"] a fact sheet with further details and sources on this issue ¹⁶. I would be grateful for your leadership in holding DHS accountable. Please let me know your position or any steps you plan to take.

Thank you for your time and service to our community.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Your address, City, State, ZIP]

[Your email and/or phone number]

Email tips: Keep paragraphs short (as above). Lead with your ask in the first few lines in case they skim. Including your full address is important – it proves you're a constituent (offices may ignore emails outside their district) ²¹ ²⁶. If you reference attachments or links, make sure they're credible (news articles, official reports, etc.). Always proofread for a polite tone and clarity. A physical letter can follow the same format (just with a handwritten signature at the end). For mailed letters, consider cc'ing others if relevant (for example, cc: the staffer or a local office).

C. Public Comment / Speaking Script:

If you have an opportunity to speak publicly – such as at a town hall, a community forum, or a city council meeting – here's a framework:

1. **Introduce Yourself & Connection:** "Hello, I'm [Name], a resident of [City] and part of [any group, if relevant]." Establishing yourself as a constituent or stakeholder gives weight to your words.
2. **State the Problem Briefly:** "I am here because I'm deeply concerned about [summarize issue: e.g. 'recent DHS operations in Minnesota that violated people's rights']."
3. **Share a Key Story or Fact:** Personalize it if you can: "Last month, an ICE agent shot a woman in our city – I saw our community in fear and pain. Local officials say DHS's account doesn't match the video evidence ⁶." If not personal, cite a striking fact: "Over 200 detainees at Sherburne

County Jail went on hunger strike this year due to conditions.” This grabs attention and shows real impact.

4. **Deliver Your Ask to the Official/Audience:** Be explicit: “I’m asking for your leadership to [investigate this incident / support X policy / speak out against these abuses].” If at a town hall with a lawmaker, end with a direct question: “**Will you commit to [the action]?**” and wait for their answer. If speaking at a rally or to media, your ask might be to the public or another target (“We call on Congress to act,” etc.).
5. **Conclusion:** Thank them or express hope: “Thank you for listening. We trust you’ll stand with our community’s values of justice.”

Keep public comments short and focused (often you have 1-2 minutes in formal settings). **Practice beforehand** so you can speak confidently without reading word-for-word. The combination of a compelling personal element and a pointed request can be very powerful. (Imagine a constituent standing up in a crowded hall telling Senator or Rep __, “My family no longer feels safe going to the grocery store because of ICE – I need you to help change this.” That can create a moment that prompts action or at least a recorded stance.)

Lastly, whether by phone, email, or in-person, **always follow up** if you don’t get a response. Politely call back or send another note: “I contacted you two weeks ago about X and am eager to hear if you’ve taken any steps.” Persistence shows them the issue isn’t going away.

7. Track Responses and Escalate Pressure

Lobbying is rarely one-and-done. To sustain momentum, you need to **track how officials respond** and be ready to **escalate** if they ignore or oppose your asks. Here’s how to create accountability and increase pressure over time:

- **Maintain a Scorecard or Log:** Create a simple spreadsheet or table tracking each official you’ve lobbied, what you asked for, and their response. Include columns for any public statements, votes, or actions they take on your issue. For example: “Rep. __ – asked on 3/1 to support oversight hearing – **Response:** no reply yet”; “Sen. __ – staff said she’s ‘looking into it’ on 3/5 call”; “Mayor __ – issued supportive tweet on 3/10”, etc. This log will help you identify who needs extra focus. It’s also useful for sharing with allies and the media: “*Out of our 8 target officials, 3 have responded positively, 2 gave non-answers, 3 have been silent.*” That in itself is a story.
- **Thank Allies, Press the Holdouts:** When an official does what you asked (even partially), **acknowledge and thank them** publicly. This positive reinforcement builds goodwill and encourages others. (e.g. “Thank you @AmyKlobuchar for calling for an investigation – that leadership is appreciated ¹³ !”) Conversely, officials who are unresponsive or dismissive should get *increased* attention. For those silent after multiple tries, consider escalating by rallying more constituents to contact them all at once (a call-in day or a flood of tweets). If an official outright refuses your request, use public channels to highlight that: “*Rep. X has so far declined to support investigating ICE abuses – we need them to step up.*” No one likes to be singled out as the outlier, so shining a light can persuade them to re-evaluate.
- **Scorecards and Public Accountability:** Take a page from issue advocacy groups – many publish “scorecards” rating officials on key issues. You can do a simpler version. For instance, if your campaign’s goal is oversight of DHS, **create a graphic or one-pager “Immigrant Rights Accountability Scorecard” for your area:** list each official and checkmark whether they’ve taken actions (held a town hall on immigration, co-signed an oversight letter, etc.). In Minnesota, with a range of stances on immigration, such a scorecard might show who’s championing reforms and

who's lagging. Share this on social media and with local press. It puts officials on notice that *constituents are keeping track*. Additionally, it educates the public on how their representatives measure up. (You might be surprised how this motivates officials – they often *do not want* a poor grade on a publicly-circulating scorecard on human rights.)

- **Escalate Tactics if Needed:** If polite lobbying isn't yielding results, consider **ramping up the pressure**:
- **Increase the Volume** – Recruit more people (friends, neighbors, allied groups) to contact the official. 50 phone calls in a week will get more attention than 5. Use action alerts to get the word out ("Everyone call Rep. Y at noon tomorrow to demand action on...!"). Sometimes an official ignoring a few voices will respond when they sense a broader constituency cares.
- **Go Public/Go Personal** – Leverage the media more directly against uncooperative officials. Write op-eds naming the official and questioning their inaction ("Why won't Senator ___ stand against ICE abuses?"). If the issue is timely, local media may even ask the official's office for comment – creating pressure to respond. Social media can be used similarly: a respectful yet pointed thread tagging the official, outlining the issue and their lack of action, can gain traction especially if shared by community influencers.
- **Attend Public Appearances** – If an official who's been unresponsive holds any public event (a parade, a speech, a fundraiser), consider having a polite presence there. Wear T-shirts or hold signs with your message ("[Congressperson], Investigate ICE Now"). This can be done without being disruptive, but enough that *they* and others see it. The goal is to remind them that wherever they go, constituents are watching this issue. Even asking your question in those forums (as mentioned in Section 6) in front of their peers or media can push them to give a more concrete answer.
- **Engage Higher or Alternate Authorities** – If a certain official is a dead end, you might escalate by going up the chain or laterally. For instance, if a local ICE field office is unaccountable and your requests to a sheriff or field director go nowhere, loop in your U.S. Senators or the state's Attorney General to apply pressure from above. In Minnesota, officials at multiple levels got involved after the Minneapolis incidents: the **Governor, U.S. Senators, and even city leaders collectively demanded answers**. That multi-level push made it harder for DHS to ignore. Use that model – if one door closes, knock on another with even more determination (and mention that you *already tried X with no result* – it builds the case for someone else to intervene).
- **Use Scorecard Results in Campaigns:** Once you have clear who's with you and who isn't, you can launch targeted public campaigns. For example, if Senator A is supportive but Senator B is silent, organize a campaign specifically focusing on Senator B until they move. This could be as formal as a petition ("Senator B: We need you to speak up for Minnesota families affected by ICE") or as informal as a social media blitz shaming their inaction. The supportive officials can be your allies here – sometimes you can even ask them to prod their colleagues ("Senator A might privately nudge Senator B if they're of the same party or caucus). Additionally, prepare for **election season** if applicable: make DHS oversight an issue candidates have to talk about. Public scorecards can be shared with voter groups or at candidate forums, effectively **escalating pressure through the ballot box**. Nothing motivates an official like knowing voters are aware of their record.

Throughout all this, **stay factual and respectful**. Even when applying pressure, stick to the documented evidence and the official's record, avoiding personal attacks. This keeps the moral high ground on your side and avoids distracting from the real issue (DHS misconduct). By tracking responses

and steadily increasing scrutiny on those who stonewall, you create an environment where doing nothing carries a cost – and that’s exactly what makes change happen.

8. Privacy, Legal, and Safety Considerations

Working on immigration issues often involves sensitive information – real people’s lives and legal statuses. It’s critical to **protect privacy and ensure safety** for everyone involved in your advocacy. Keep these considerations in mind:

- **Protect Identities of Vulnerable Individuals:** Many immigrants fear retaliation or deportation if they speak out. If you collect stories or testimonies from undocumented folks or others at risk, *treat that data as confidential*. Use first names or aliases in public materials (unless they explicitly consent to full names). Blur faces in photos/videos posted publicly. For example, if a local asylum-seeker shares that they were abused by ICE in detention, you might summarize their story in a letter to Congress without naming them, or ask a lawmaker if the person can share their story *in a protected setting* (like an anonymous affidavit or a closed-door briefing). **Always get informed consent** from individuals before using their stories or images. Explain how it might be used and the potential reach. It’s their right to decide what risks to take. Your role is to amplify their experience *safely*.
- **Secure Your Data:** Maintain secure storage for any sensitive documents (videos of raids, personal statements, lists of impacted families). Use password protection and limit access to only those in the team who need it. If you’re communicating about sensitive plans (like protests or coordinating with undocumented folks), consider using encrypted messaging apps (Signal, WhatsApp) rather than open social media DMs or standard text/email. This reduces the risk of unwanted surveillance or leaks. Also, be mindful of what you post publicly; for instance, don’t inadvertently reveal someone’s location or immigration status in an online update. Activists have reported government monitoring of social media, so it’s wise to assume anything public could be seen by ICE or others. That doesn’t mean don’t post – just scrub personal info and double-check content before you do.
- **Know Your Rights (and Limits):** Educate yourself and your team on the legal rights in these scenarios:
 - **Right to Record:** As mentioned, you generally have the First Amendment right to record law enforcement in public spaces *as long as you do not interfere*. DHS agents have at times tried to intimidate observers, but courts have upheld the right to film ⁷. Minnesota, for example, values community oversight and Governor Walz explicitly noted that residents documenting enforcement play an essential role in transparency ²⁷. If an agent orders you to stop filming, you can politely state your right to do so, but *do not escalate*. If they force you to stop or confiscate a device, document that after the fact and seek legal help – it could become part of your complaint.
 - **Protest and Assembly:** If you organize rallies or protests, know local laws about permits, noise, etc. Keep protests peaceful and make sure participants know not to trespass on federal property or block operations in a way that could lead to arrests (unless that’s an intentional strategy by experienced activists). At the same time, *DHS must also follow the law* – be aware of the line between civil disobedience and unlawful actions. Having legal observers (from groups like the National Lawyers Guild) at any direct actions can safeguard rights.
 - **Harassment or Surveillance:** Unfortunately, outspoken immigrant-rights activists have sometimes faced harassment (online trolls or even being singled out by hostile officials). Take

precautions: avoid sharing personal addresses or info publicly. If you suspect government surveillance (like unfamiliar vehicles or attempts to infiltrate meetings), reach out to civil liberties organizations like the ACLU. Keep communications on official channels, and don't be intimidated if someone calls you "anti-American" or such – stay on message about the *law and rights*. Remember, *advocating for oversight is a patriotic duty* that upholds the Constitution.

- **Safeguard Sensitive Data in Congress Interactions:** If you are providing Congress with documentation that includes personal data (names of undocumented individuals, etc.), inquire about how they will handle it. Members of Congress can often receive confidential whistleblower information and keep it protected. Mark documents as "confidential" if needed and request that they not be published without consent. Staffers usually understand this, but it's good to verbally confirm. If you're submitting written testimony to, say, a legislative hearing, you might be able to anonymize names ("Witness A, an asylum seeker from X country, experienced Y"). The key is to **achieve accountability without endangering those who came forward**.
- **Mind Privacy Laws:** Be aware of certain legal boundaries. For example, healthcare or education records of immigrants might be protected by privacy laws – don't obtain or share someone's medical or school records without proper permission. If you're recording conversations, know your state's wiretap law: Minnesota is a one-party consent state (meaning you can record your own conversations), but other states differ. And while FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) is a great tool to get information *from* the government, they too have the Privacy Act which limits release of personal info about individuals. So if you FOIA DHS for records about an incident, don't expect personal data of victims unless they consented; you might get redacted documents.
- **Consult Legal Experts:** When in doubt, talk to lawyers who specialize in immigration or civil rights. Many are willing to advise activists pro bono on issues like how to safely collect affidavits, or what not to publicly disclose. In Minnesota, organizations like the University of Minnesota's Immigration Law Clinic or Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid could be resources. Even a quick consult can clarify, for instance, whether organizing a campaign might impact someone's pending immigration case (sometimes public campaigns help, other times a lawyer might say to wait until a case is decided). Protecting someone's asylum claim, for example, might mean keeping details out of the spotlight until they're safe.
- **Self-Care and Security:** Finally, safety isn't just about data – it's also personal. Advocacy can be stressful, and if you or others receive hateful messages or threats, take them seriously. Don't engage with harassers online. Document any credible threats and inform authorities or nonprofit watchdog groups if needed. Within your team, establish basic security measures: meet in secure locations, use sign-in sheets at events only if necessary (and keep them guarded; you don't want ICE getting hold of attendee lists). If you host a community forum for immigrants to share stories, consider making it a private, invite-only event to avoid any ICE presence. Creating a **welcoming, safe environment** is crucial for people to come forward and for your team to sustain itself.

In summary, always **balance transparency with protection**. We want to expose DHS misconduct, but we must not expose vulnerable people to more harm. By being mindful of privacy and legal boundaries, you'll maintain the trust of the community you're fighting for and keep your campaign on solid, ethical ground.

9. Adapting Your Strategy: Federal vs. State vs. Local Action

Immigration issues span **all levels of government**, and effective grassroots lobbying will adjust tactics depending on whether you're targeting federal, state, or local authorities. Here's how to adapt your efforts for each level – with Minnesota-specific context as an example:

- **Federal Level (Congress & DHS Headquarters):** Many immigration policies and DHS oversight powers lie at the federal level. Your targets here are U.S. Senators and Representatives (and, indirectly, DHS leadership like the Secretary). At this level, focus on **Congressional oversight and legislation**:
 - Identify your Members of Congress (for Minnesota, your two Senators – e.g. Klobuchar and Smith – and your House representative for your district). These officials can demand answers from DHS, introduce bills, and vote on budgets. Tailor your asks to federal authority (as discussed in Sections 4-6). For instance, asking for a **Senate hearing** on ICE practices or urging a Congressperson to support the federal Dignity Not Detention Act.
 - Recognize committees: If a Minnesota rep sits on the House Homeland Security or Judiciary Committee, they have extra sway on immigration oversight – definitely lobby them to use that position. If not, you can still ask your MoCs to coordinate with colleagues who do (e.g. “Will you work with the Homeland Security Committee to address this?”).
 - Use federal data and national frames: Compliment local stories with national stats (Congress cares about the big picture too). E.g., “Nationwide, ICE’s use of force incidents have spiked ²⁸, reflecting what we saw in Minneapolis – this is why Congress must act.” Leverage alliances with national organizations (ACLU, NILC, etc.) for template letters or sign-on campaigns directed at federal officials.
 - Persistence is key – federal officials are often busy with many issues. But a strong constituency voice (calls, town halls, media) from back home in Minnesota can break through. Show them that Minnesotans see immigration justice as tied to core values (perhaps invoke our state’s tradition of welcoming refugees, etc.). Highlighting that *public safety in Minnesota* is being undermined by federal actions (as Klobuchar did, noting ICE’s actions made the state “less safe” ²⁹) can persuade even law-and-order focused lawmakers to pay attention.
- **State Level (Governor, State Legislature, State Agencies):** States can’t change federal immigration law, but they can enact policies to protect residents and hold federal agents accountable within the state. Minnesota has shown leadership here:
 - **Lobby the Governor and State Officials:** A governor can be a loud advocate. Governor Tim Walz, for example, has **publicly challenged federal immigration tactics** – he even testified to Congress defending Minnesota’s approach and wrote to DHS about unlawful ICE actions ³⁰ ¹⁴. If your governor or state attorney general is sympathetic, encourage them to keep pushing (e.g. ask for state-level investigations into incidents, or executive orders that set standards when federal agents operate in the state). In more neutral cases, show them how the issue affects state interests (community safety, constitutional rights, etc.). Minnesota’s Attorney General Keith Ellison has been vocal against federal overreach ³¹; advocates can feed his office cases or complaints to act on.
 - **Use State Legislatures:** Work with state legislators (your state senators and reps) to introduce state laws or resolutions. States can pass laws limiting cooperation with ICE by local police, providing attorneys for detainees, banning private immigration detention contracts, etc. In Minnesota, lawmakers introduced and passed measures making it a “**sanctuary state**” – limiting state/local participation in federal immigration enforcement ³². You can lobby your state reps to support such measures. Organize testimony for committee hearings on these bills: personal

stories from constituents can sway state lawmakers who see immigration as a federal issue but care about their community's wellbeing. Even symbolic resolutions (e.g. a Minnesota legislative resolution condemning family separation) can keep pressure on federal officials and show solidarity to impacted communities.

- **State Oversight Mechanisms:** Push for state-level oversight of federal actions where possible. For example, after repeated ICE incidents, a state can form a **commission to document and respond to federal agent misconduct** (Illinois recently did this ³³). Minnesota could consider something similar – advocates could propose it to friendly legislators or the Governor's office. While states can't discipline federal agents, they can collect evidence, sue the federal government for violations, or pass laws that indirectly check federal abuses (like enforcing trespassing laws if ICE enters private property without a warrant, etc.).
- **Coordinate with State and Local Allies:** Often, state officials will echo local concerns upward. Keep your state officials in the loop about what's happening on the ground. For instance, if there's an ICE raid at a Minnesota school (there was concern about that ³⁴), inform your state representatives – they might pressure the Governor or even call on the feds to back off. As seen when **Minnesota's mayors and state officials united to fight federal lawsuits against our sanctuary policies** ³⁵, a unified state-front can be powerful. Your advocacy can encourage that unity by briefing each level on what the others are doing (sometimes officials don't communicate until prompted by constituents).
- **Local Level (City/County Governments, Police/Sheriffs, Community):** Much of the direct interface with ICE happens locally – arrests on city streets, detainees in county jails, etc. Thus, targeting local authorities can yield quick improvements and build momentum for broader change:
- **City Councils and Mayors:** Push city leaders to adopt **"safe city" or sanctuary ordinances** if they haven't yet. Minneapolis and St. Paul already have policies against city personnel cooperating with ICE in most cases, which their mayors vigorously defend ³⁵. If you're in a smaller Minnesota city or suburb, educate your city council about these policies and why they enhance community trust. You can lobby for ordinances that prohibit local police from asking about immigration status, or bar city jails from holding people for ICE without a warrant. Local resolutions condemning certain DHS actions (like the city formally denouncing the ICE shooting and demanding answers) also add pressure – they make headlines and show consensus. Attend council meetings during public comment to raise these ideas, and provide model ordinance language (groups like the Immigrant Law Center or ACLU may have templates).
- **County Sheriffs and Jails:** Counties often decide whether to honor ICE detainer requests or partner with ICE (through 287(g) agreements, etc.). Hennepin and Ramsey counties have in the past limited cooperation with ICE; ensure they continue to do so or strengthen those stances. If any Minnesota county is collaborating too closely with ICE, focus there with community petitions and media exposure (no sheriff likes being known as ICE's henchman if the public is against it). Also, county boards can oversee conditions in county jails that hold ICE detainees on contract – demand they inspect these facilities and terminate contracts if abuses occur. For example, if Sherburne County jail (which has an ICE contract) mistreats detainees, local advocates could lobby the county to reconsider that arrangement.
- **Local Police and Policies:** Work with local law enforcement leadership if possible. Some police chiefs (like Minneapolis' chief cited by Klobuchar ³⁶) don't want ICE's aggressive tactics undermining their community relations. You can support these officials by amplifying their stance and urging formal policies. If local police are assisting ICE (e.g. in joint task forces), bring it to light and call for transparency or cessation of that practice. Often, police departments will yield if public safety arguments are made: e.g. "When immigrants fear police due to ICE

entanglement, crimes go unreported, making us all less safe.” If you find a receptive ear in local law enforcement, build that alliance – perhaps they can become a surprising advocate for your cause (urging DHS to curb rogue agents for the sake of local trust).

- **Community Mobilization:** On the local level, you can engage the community more directly in lobbying efforts. Organize “know your rights” trainings and then collectively visit a city council meeting to share experiences. Start a neighborhood rapid response team that not only witnesses ICE actions but also pressures local officials right after an incident (for example, if ICE is spotted in a community, neighbors might call the mayor’s office immediately to report and demand intervention). In Minnesota’s context, community rapid responses were key in documenting the January shooting – people filming and contacting city leaders in real-time. Leverage community institutions too: faith leaders, school boards, local business owners can all speak to local officials about the immigrant community’s contributions and why abusive enforcement is unacceptable here. A chorus of local voices gives political cover for city/county officials to take bold stands.

Adapting messaging: When shifting between levels, tweak your framing. With **federal officials**, emphasize constitutional duty, national standards, and oversight responsibilities (“Congress must ensure DHS obeys the law” ³⁷). With **state officials**, stress state values and rights (“Minnesota will not tolerate unconstitutional actions by federal agents on our soil” is essentially what Governor Walz conveyed ²⁷). With **local officials**, focus on community impact and safety (“Our town thrives when everyone feels safe reporting crimes and going to work or school without fear of ICE – let’s keep feds in check here.”). The core issue is the same, but the angle of concern shifts to meet each audience.

Example – Coordinated Multi-Level Push: Suppose ICE conducts a raid in a Twin Cities suburb resulting in several residents being detained and a U.S. citizen injured. A comprehensive advocacy approach could look like: - Locally: work with the city council to issue a statement condemning the raid and asserting the city’s non-cooperation policy; demand the county sheriff refuse to hold the detainees beyond normal release times. - State: ask your state legislators to query the state public safety department or even pass a quick resolution denouncing the operation; get the Governor’s office to contact ICE regional directors asking what happened (as well as use the bully pulpit to criticize any excesses). - Federal: flood your U.S. Representative’s office with calls about the incident, urging them to bring it up in D.C.; concurrently, have community leaders write to the Senators requesting they ask ICE’s director for an explanation and policy changes. - Media: ensure each level’s actions are publicized, creating a drumbeat – local news covers the city’s outcry, which prompts state news about the Governor’s stance, which then dovetails with the Senators raising it in a committee or press release. DHS will feel pressure coming from all angles – local protests, state officials, and federal lawmakers.

By adapting your tactics to every level of government, you leave no escape for the issue to be ignored. **Immigration enforcement might be federal in scope, but it’s local in impact** – so we need local and state champions as well as federal ones. Minnesota’s experience shows that progress often comes from the ground up: city and state policies laid the groundwork (e.g. sanctuary ordinances, legal aid for immigrants), which in turn bolstered our federal delegation to push harder in D.C. Use each victory or statement at one level to fuel action at another.

Conclusion: Grassroots lobbying for DHS oversight is challenging work, but it’s immensely powerful. When ordinary people define a just goal, organize smartly, document the truth, and persistently demand action through every channel, change happens. In Minnesota, we’ve seen a tragic incident spark a movement – but movements only sustain if people like you keep at it. Use this guide in your community, adapt it, and share it. Each call you make, each story you lift up, each official you educate is a step toward a more accountable and humane immigration system. As the saying goes, *“The world is*

run by those who show up.” By showing up for immigrant justice – in meetings, on the phone, at the Capitol or City Hall – you are exercising your rights and upholding the highest values of our democracy. Stay safe, stay persistent, and know that your voice **can** influence even the vast Department of Homeland Security. The pressure you apply today may save a family from trauma tomorrow.

Additional Resources: For further reading and support, consider the following: the **Eyes on ICE** toolkit by WITNESS for tips on filming immigration enforcement safely ⁵, the ACLU's guides on immigrants' rights and lobbying tips ³⁸ ³⁹, and local organizations like the Advocates for Human Rights (Minneapolis) for legal and advocacy resources. Together, informed and motivated, we can hold DHS accountable – from Minnesota to the nation at large. **Sources:** ¹³ ¹⁶ ¹⁴ ⁵, etc.

¹ civilrightsdocs.info

<https://civilrightsdocs.info/pdf/field/toolkit/2015-update/Chapter-1-Setting-Smart-Goals.pdf>

² ¹² **Indivisible on Offense: Implementing the New Strategy Locally | Indivisible**

<https://indivisible.org/resource/indivisible-offense-implementing-new-strategy-locally>

³ ⁴ **Grassroots Activism Made Simple: A Quickstart Guide**

<https://callhub.io/blog/advocacy/grassroots-activism/>

⁵ ⁹ **WITNESS Media Lab | Eyes on ICE - WITNESS Media Lab**

<https://lab.witness.org/projects/eyes-on-ice/>

⁶ ¹³ ²⁹ ³⁶ **Klobuchar Statement on Fatal Shooting by ICE Agent in Minneapolis - News Releases - U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar**

<https://www.klobuchar.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/news-releases?ID=B63C4D7D-F124-4F19-B82B-5020B20A93C7>

⁷ ⁸ ¹⁴ ²⁷ ³⁰ **Governor Walz Sends Letter to Secretary Noem After U.S. Citizens Unconstitutionally Detained During ICE Operations**

<https://mn.gov/governor/newsroom/press-releases/?id=1055-715940>

¹⁰ ¹⁵ ¹⁶ ²⁸ ³⁷ **Holding DHS Accountable for Lawlessness - NILC**

<https://www.nilc.org/resources/holding-dhs-accountable-for-lawlessness-a-toolkit-for-members-of-congress/>

¹¹ ²⁰ ²¹ ²⁶ ³⁸ ³⁹ **Talking to your Representatives | ACLU of Illinois**

<https://www.aclu-il.org/en/talking-your-representatives>

¹⁷ ¹⁸ ¹⁹ ²² ²³ **Contacting Congress – Sending an Email – AAP**

<https://www.physiatry.org/resource/contacting-congress-sending-an-email/>

²⁴ ²⁵ **How to Call Your Representative to Protest Jailing Immigrant Families - YES! Magazine Solutions Journalism**

<https://www.yesmagazine.org/democracy/2018/06/21/how-to-call-your-representative-to-protest-jailing-immigrant-families>

³¹ ³⁵ **Justice Department sues Minnesota over sanctuary policies**

<https://sahanjournal.com/news-partners/justice-department-minnesota-lawsuit-sanctuary-policies/>

³² **HF 2860 Status in the House - 93rd Legislature (2023 - 2024)**

<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/bills/93/2023/0/HF/2860/>

³³ **Pritzker forms independent commission to document misconduct of federal agents | Capitol News Illinois**

<https://capitolnewsillinois.com/news/pritzker-forms-independent-commission-to-document-misconduct-of-federal-agents/>

³⁴ **Gov. Tim Walz (D-MN) said “ICE agents entered a Minnesota school ...**

<https://www.facebook.com/CBSNews/posts/gov-tim-walz-d-mn-said-ice-agents-entered-a-minnesota-school-causing-disruptions/1283166213675220/>