

Get the Receipts: A Field Guide

Companion to "It's a Feint. Not a Real Fight." Part one of three. From Little Bird.

Everything in this guide is public record. None of it requires a lawyer, a subscription, or anyone's permission. The system counts on the records being scattered and ugly to find. This is the map through the scatter.

Work top to bottom, or jump straight to your level. Federal, state, county, local, judges. Then read the last section, because one person pulling receipts is a hobby, and five people pulling receipts on a schedule is an operation.

Federal: votes and procedure

congress.gov is the master record. Bills, roll-call votes, nominations, committee activity, and the full Congressional Record, searchable by word and by member name. If a senator claimed they would object to unanimous consent, the objection is in the Congressional Record or it did not happen. Search the member's name plus "I object."

senate.gov, Roll Call Votes. Every Senate vote, every senator's position, back decades. This is where "I opposed that nominee" gets checked against whether they only voted no, or actually used procedure.

clerk.house.gov. House roll calls, plus the discharge petition tracker, which lists every signature by name. If your representative says they support forcing a bill to the floor, their signature is either on the petition or it is not. Thirty seconds to check.

Committee websites. Every committee has one ([committee name].senate.gov, and the House equivalents). Hearing schedules, markup notices, business meeting records. Procedural fights leave their trail here first.

govtrack.us. Independent tracker with alerts. Set an alert on your two senators and your representative and the receipts come to you.

c-span.org. Full searchable video of floor and committee proceedings by member name. When an office says the member "fought hard," the tape answers.

Federal: money

fec.gov is the primary source and the one that matters most. Two searches, always two:

1. Search the official's **campaign committee** by candidate name. Itemized receipts show every PAC contribution.

2. Search their **leadership PAC**. This is a legally separate committee with a different name, usually linked from the candidate's FEC page under affiliated committees. This is the side door. An official can truthfully say their campaign takes no corporate PAC money while their leadership PAC banks checks from Google and Nike. Both doors, every time.

opensecrets.org. FEC data made readable: industry totals per member, top donors, PAC-versus-individual splits, career numbers. The website works fine even though the public API was shut off.

endcitizensunited.org. The no-corporate-PAC pledge roster. Treat it as the claim, not the verdict, then verify the claim against the FEC filings yourself. That two-step is exactly how the gap between an official's pledge and their leadership PAC gets caught.

State

Your state legislature's website. Every state posts bill status, committee votes, and floor journals. The navigation is uniformly terrible. The votes are there anyway. Bookmark the journal page for your own legislators' chambers.

Your state's campaign finance portal. Every state has one. In California it is Cal-Access through the Secretary of State, plus FPPC filings. Search the official's committee by name, same two-door logic as federal.

ncsl.org (National Conference of State Legislatures). The reference desk: which states allow recalls, ballot initiative rules, session calendars, and legislative procedure by state. Check here before promising a recall, because not every state has one.

ballotpedia.org. Every official at every level, who represents you, when they are next on a ballot, filing deadlines, recall provisions by state, judicial elections. If you only bookmark one site from this guide, bookmark this one.

County and local

County elections office / registrar of voters. Local campaign finance filings, candidate statements, and the filing deadlines and paperwork for running for office or recruiting someone who should.

County and city clerk sites. Agendas, minutes, and recorded votes for boards of supervisors, city councils, school boards. If they are not posted, your state's public records law (CPRA in California, FOIA equivalents elsewhere) compels production on a statutory deadline. A records request is a form, not a lawsuit. File it, note the date, and calendar the deadline, because the clock is your leverage.

Special districts. Water boards, fire districts, hospital districts, utility districts. These control real money with almost zero public attention, seats go uncontested for decades, and

the same tools apply: agendas, minutes, campaign filings, public comment. This is the softest ground in American politics.

Judges

ballotpedia.org judicial pages. Which judges in your state face retention or contested elections, and when.

State judicial performance commissions, where your state has one: official evaluations of sitting judges.

courtlistener.com (free) and PACER (small fees, waivers available). Actual rulings. A judge's record is their rulings, not their ballot statement.

Watching it live

The **Congressional Record daily edition** posts on congress.gov every legislative day.

Committee meeting notices post in advance by rule. Calendar the local ones and show up. A visible audience changes how officials behave, and public comment goes into the minutes, which become the next receipt.

Turning receipts into a file, and a file into a community

One person checking records is easy to ignore and easy to burn out. The unit that works is small, boring, and relentless: a receipts circle.

Start with five people and one spreadsheet. Any shared spreadsheet works. Columns: official, office, date, what they said, what the record shows, source link, who checked it, follow-up date. That is the whole tool. Fancy is the enemy of maintained.

Divide by official, not by task. Each person adopts one or two officials and owns them completely: their votes, their filings, their public statements, their calls. Ownership beats rotation because the owner learns the official's patterns, and patterns are where the story lives.

Meet on a schedule, thirty minutes, twice a month. Each person reports the gaps they found between statement and record. Log the gaps. Decide which one gets a call, which one gets a records request, and which one gets sent to local press with the links attached.

Log every call using the scripts (part three of this toolkit). A shared log across five people, kept for six months, is a dossier no single reporter has time to build, and it is exactly what a primary challenger needs on day one.

Publish on a rhythm. A monthly one-page summary, posted wherever your community already gathers: the library board, the church bulletin, the neighborhood forum, a plain

email list. Receipts attached, adjectives omitted. The dry version is the credible version, and credible is what spreads through people who do not trust anything anymore.

Recruit from the people already showing up. The ones at the school board meeting, the ones who read the agenda, the retirees with mornings free and forty years of institutional memory. This work rewards patience and punishes performance, which makes it the rare kind of politics that older hands dominate.

Connect circles, don't merge them. When you find another circle in the next town, swap monthly summaries and methods, not membership. Small stays functional. A network of small is how you cover a county, then a state.

The friction in all of this is deliberate. The records were made inconvenient because inconvenience works. Walking through it anyway, on a schedule, with four other people, is the whole act of resistance this guide exists for.

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