

The Scripts: Word for Word

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

These are written like a play. **YOU** is you. **STAFFER** is the person who answers, usually an intern or junior staffer. Their likely responses are written out so nothing surprises you. Read your lines as written or make them your own; the bolded parts are the load-bearing words.

Print this in large type. Keep it next to the phone. Have a pen ready.

The five rules, before any call:

1. Say you are a **constituent** and give your **zip code**. Offices discard non-constituents.
2. Ask a **yes-or-no question about a specific action**, not a feeling.
3. Get the **staffer's first name** at the start.
4. Say you will **check the public record**, and name which one.
5. **Write down** the date, the staffer's name, the question, and the answer. Every time.

To find your officials' phone numbers: **congress.gov/members** for federal, **ballotpedia.org** for everyone else. The Capitol switchboard, (202) 224-3121, connects to any House or Senate office.

SCRIPT 1: Senator, unanimous consent objection

One senator can slow the whole chamber by objecting to unanimous consent. This call asks if yours will.

YOU: Hi, my name is [your name]. I'm a constituent from [town], zip code [zip]. Who am I speaking with?

STAFFER: This is [name], how can I help you?

YOU: Thanks, [name]. One question, yes or no. Will the Senator commit to **objecting to unanimous consent requests on the Senate floor this week** to slow down [the nomination / the bill]? A single senator can do that.

STAFFER: (*most likely*) I can't speak for the Senator, but I'll pass your comment along.

YOU: I understand you can't answer for them. Please **log my question exactly as I asked it**, and note that I will be **checking the Congressional Record** for objections under the Senator's name. When should I call back for the Senator's answer?

STAFFER: (*likely*) You can call back any time / I don't have a timeline.

YOU: Then I'll call back **Friday**. Thank you, [name].

WRITE DOWN: date, staffer's name, "asked about UC objection on [topic]," their answer, and your Friday callback.

SCRIPT 2: Senator, hold on a nominee

A "hold" is a senator telling leadership they object to a nominee. It costs one phone call and forces real floor time.

YOU: Hi, I'm a constituent from zip code [zip]. Who am I speaking with?

STAFFER: This is [name].

YOU: Thanks, [name]. Has the Senator **placed a hold** on the nomination of [nominee]? And if not, **will they**? Placing a hold requires nothing but notifying leadership.

STAFFER: *(likely)* I don't have information on that.

YOU: That's fine. Please **log that a constituent asked** whether the Senator has placed or will place a hold on [nominee], and that the office had no answer. What day should I call back?

WRITE DOWN: date, staffer, "hold on [nominee]?", answer, callback date.

SCRIPT 3: Senator, the two-hour rule

An obscure Senate rule: any single member can object and shut down a committee meeting that runs more than two hours after the Senate convenes. Almost nobody uses it. That's the point of asking.

YOU: Hi, I'm a constituent from zip [zip]. Who am I speaking with? Thanks, [name]. My question is about the Senate's **two-hour rule**, Rule 26. Any single senator can invoke it to stop a committee meeting. Has the Senator invoked it **even once this Congress** to slow [committee] business? Will they this week?

STAFFER: *(very likely)* I'm not familiar with that rule / I'd have to check.

YOU: That's all right, most people aren't, which is why I'm asking. Please **write the question down as I said it** and pass it to the legislative staff. I follow the committee's meeting notices online, so I'll see whether it happens.

WRITE DOWN: date, staffer, "two-hour rule, [committee]," answer.

SCRIPT 4: House member, discharge petition

A discharge petition with 218 signatures forces a bill out of committee to the floor. Signatures are public. You can check before you call.

Before calling: go to **clerk.house.gov**, find Discharge Petitions, and see whether your representative has signed the one for [bill].

YOU: Hi, I'm a constituent from [district or town], zip [zip]. Who am I speaking with? Thanks, [name]. I looked at the House Clerk's website, and my Representative **has not signed the discharge petition** for [bill]. Why not, and **will they sign it**?

STAFFER: (*likely*) I'll have to check on the Congressman's position.

YOU: Please do. The signatures are public at clerk.house.gov, so I'll see the answer either way. Please log that a constituent asked, and I'll call back **next week**.

WRITE DOWN: date, staffer, bill number, answer, whether the signature ever appears.

SCRIPT 5: House member, committee tools

YOU: Hi, I'm a constituent from zip [zip]. Who am I speaking with? Thanks, [name]. Minority members of committees have real tools: privileged motions, minority witness days, motions to subpoena. In the last six months, **which of these has my Representative personally used**, in which committee, on what date?

STAFFER: (*likely*) I don't have that level of detail.

YOU: Understood. Please pass the question to legislative staff, and **log that a constituent asked**. If the answer is "none," I'd like to hear that plainly. I'll call back in a week.

WRITE DOWN: date, staffer, answer, callback.

SCRIPT 6: The money question (works on any official, any level)

The trick here: officials keep two wallets. The campaign committee, and a separate "leadership PAC." Many refuse corporate money in the first and take it in the second. Ask about both.

YOU: Hi, I'm a constituent from zip [zip]. Who am I speaking with? Thanks, [name]. Two-part question. Does [official]'s **campaign committee** accept corporate PAC contributions? And **separately, because it is a legally different entity**, does their **leadership PAC** accept corporate money?

STAFFER: (*likely*) The [official] doesn't take corporate PAC money.

YOU: That's the campaign committee. I'm also asking about the **leadership PAC**, which files separately with the FEC. I've looked at the filings. Will [official] pledge to refuse corporate money through **both** doors?

STAFFER: (*likely*) I'll pass that along.

YOU: Please log it word for word: **campaign committee and leadership PAC, both**. Thank you, [name].

WRITE DOWN: date, staffer, the exact answer, and what fec.gov shows for both committees.

SCRIPT 7: A specific nomination (adapt the bracketed parts)

YOU: Hi, constituent from zip [zip]. Who am I speaking with? Thanks, [name]. On the nomination of [nominee] to [office]: how will the Senator vote, **and what procedure will they use beyond the vote?** Holds, objections to unanimous consent, extended debate. A no vote with no procedure is a press release. **I'm asking about the procedure.**

WRITE DOWN: date, staffer, answer on the vote, answer on procedure. They are different answers.

SCRIPT 8: State legislator

YOU: Hi, I'm a constituent in your district, [town]. Who am I speaking with? Thanks, [name]. On [state bill number]: how did [legislator] vote in committee, and how will they vote on the floor? I read the journals on the legislature's website, so I'll verify. Second question: does [legislator] accept contributions from [the industry connected to this bill]? That's on the state's campaign finance portal, and **I've looked**.

WRITE DOWN: date, staffer, both answers, what the journal and the portal show.

SCRIPT 9: County supervisor, city council, school board

YOU: Hi, I'm a resident of [area]. Who am I speaking with? Thanks, [name]. On **agenda item [number]** at the [date] meeting: how does [official] intend to vote, and why?

STAFFER: (*likely*) The [official] hasn't taken a position yet.

YOU: Then please log that a resident asked before the vote. Also: the minutes and vote records for the last three meetings don't appear to be posted. **Consider this a public**

records request for them under [your state's public records act]. Today is [date], so the statutory clock starts now. What's the email where I should send the written version?

WRITE DOWN: date, staffer, the email address, and the records-request deadline.

SCRIPT 10: The follow-up call (the one that actually matters)

One call is an opinion. A follow-up call with the record in hand is accountability. Make this call every time.

YOU: Hi, I'm a constituent from zip [zip], and this is a follow-up. On [date] I spoke with [first staffer's name] and asked whether [official] would [specific action]. I was told [their answer]. The public record now shows [what actually happened], and I have the link in front of me. I'm calling so the office knows that **the gap between the answer and the record has been noticed, logged, and will be shared.** Who am I speaking with today, so I can note it?

WRITE DOWN: everything. This entry is the receipt of receipts.

SCRIPT 11: Handing it to local press

Reporters are stretched thin. A pre-assembled story gets covered; a rant does not. This one can be an email.

YOU (email or voicemail): My name is [name], I live in [town]. I have a documented gap between what [official] says and what their record shows. In one sentence: [official] says [claim], but [the FEC filing / the roll call / the meeting minutes] shows [fact]. Source links attached. I also have a dated log of calls to their office about it. Is anyone at [outlet] covering this? I'm reachable at [contact].

Send the same package to the local paper, the regional public radio newsroom, and one independent outlet. **Receipts attached. Adjectives omitted.**

The loop, one last time

Pull the record. Make the call. Write it down. Call back. Compare answer to record. Publish the gap. Hand your log to four neighbors doing the same thing.

That is not a hashtag. That is a file. Files outlive news cycles, and files are what primary challengers run on.

a little bird alittlebirdseyeview.com

