

HOW TO CREATE A POWERFUL PUBLIC COMMENT

Because we deserve to be heard!

Federal agencies make big policy changes through a “rulemaking process.” When they issue a proposed rule, agencies have to ask the general public for feedback – *is the rule good? Bad? Should it be changed?* Federal law **requires** agencies to gather, consider, and address public comments when finalizing rules.

Federal agencies might not change a proposed rule because of what we say. Nevertheless, the more unique comments submitted show the force of our collective opposition to a rule. Public comments can help lawyers challenge harmful rules and can encourage Congress to reverse an agency decision through the lawmaking process. **Most importantly, the public comment process ensures that you – your voice, your experience, and your community – are on the record.**

Tips & Tricks

- **Be unique:** Don’t use a template or other people’s words. Ground your comment in your own experience. You are the subject matter expert.
- **Be specific & relevant:** You don’t need to know everything, but do name the specific part of the rule that you care most about! Keep it personal and relevant to the aspect of the rule you care about.
- **Don’t sweat the small stuff:** Your comment doesn’t need to be perfect or long. It needs to be about your story. What is happening in your community? How would you be impacted by the rule?



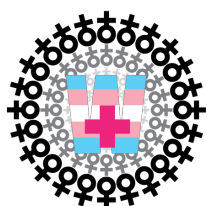
Other Resources

- Harvard Center for HIV Law and Innovation, “[Why Public Comments Matter.](#)”
- Protect Democracy, “[What makes an Effective Public Comment on a Federal Regulation?](#)”
- Defend Public Health, “[Guide to Commenting on Office of Management and Budget.](#)”

Create your public comment in three easy steps

1. Prepare!

- You don't need to know *everything* or comment on *every* aspect of the rule. It is enough to **know the part of the rule that concerns you**.
- Every proposed rule will have a **deadline**. Generally this is 30 to 60 days after it is issued. Be sure to prepare and submit your comment before the deadline!
- There's a 5,000 character **word limit – this is about 1.5 pages, single spaced**. If you are going over 5,000 characters, you can submit your comment as a PDF.



3. Submit!

- **Save** your comment for your own records
- **Submit** your comment through the federal register through **Regulations.gov** before the deadline.
- **Share** your comment with your members of Congress.
- **Celebrate!** Email your comment to us (info@pwn-usa.org) so we can celebrate your advocacy!



Remember to keep it original. Use your own words!

2. Draft!

- **Introduce yourself**: Explain why you're interested in the rule. *What is it about your perspective – your community; your personal experience; your professional role – that informs your comment?*
- **Take a clear stance**: Name the specific part of the rule that concerns you and clearly state your position in support or opposition. *Remember: You do NOT have to comment on every aspect of the rule. It's best to select the issues that you understand and most impact your life.*
- **Explain why it matters to you**: Detail how the proposed rule would impact you and your community if implemented. This is a good place to speak from personal perspective. Include a story to show the agency what's at stake; what the real-life consequences would be. *For example, if the rule would cut Medicaid, share how the Medicaid program has impacted your life and what would happen if you suddenly lost health insurance.*
- **Close strongly**: Reiterate your stance and tell the agency what you want them to do. *For example, if you oppose the rule, say, "Once again, I oppose the proposed rule and urge this agency not to finalize the proposed rule."*