



CONNECTING THE DOTS

How to Message the Abuse of State Preemption

Audience-Specific Message Modules

This guide is an addendum to LSSC's new messaging resource [“Connecting the Dots – How to Message the Abuse of State Preemption,”](#) and is intended to help you tailor your messaging for specific audiences. We encourage you to use this tool in tandem with the [larger message guide](#). The larger guide contains key provisions to keep in mind whenever writing or talking about abusive preemptions – including key takeaways from our 2021 message research; framing considerations; and guidance on how to define bad preemption.

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Talking about the corrosive impact of corporate interest

- Regardless of where you live, you should have the power to make your voice heard and work with your neighbors and local elected officials on the priorities and policies that meet your community's needs. We know our communities best, and that's why we elect local officials to advance policies that protect our health, safety, and well-being. *[If possible, tailor to a specific issue.]*
- But too often lately, state lawmakers beholden to corporate donors are overstepping and interfering with local communities – undermining local policies they don't like through the abuse of a concept known as preemption. When state lawmakers abuse preemption to take power away from local communities, it hurts all of us.
 - » There are a few reasons for the increase in preemption, but one of the biggest is that state lawmakers are listening more to corporate special interests than their own constituents.
 - » Corporations and special interest lobbyists have bought too much influence. Too often, local policies on issues like paid sick leave, fair wages, affordable housing, or broadband access are undermined by state officials – all because corporations value their shareholders' bottom lines more than the prosperity of our local communities.
 - » *[If possible, tailor with a specific local example.]*
- This abuse of preemption isn't happening in a vacuum. Corporations are working with groups like ALEC to advance bills nationwide that take power away from people and communities, all to enrich themselves.
 - » When state lawmakers listen to special interest lobbyists instead of their constituents; it's often BIPOC, immigrants, LGBTQ people, women, and working people who bear the brunt of the impact.
- Local decisions shouldn't be for sale. We all deserve to live in a place where our local elected officials have the power they need to make the right decisions, without special interest interference.



Talking about preemption as a tool to undermine BIPOC political power

- Regardless of where you live, you should have the power to make your voice heard and work with your local elected officials on the priorities and policies that meet your community's needs. We know our communities best, and that's why we elect local officials to advance policies that protect our health, safety, and well-being. *[If possible, tailor to a specific issue.]*
- And many cities have significant BIPOC constituencies that have voted to elect local representatives to solve local problems. State legislators in many states, on the other hand, don't look like or understand our communities. They skew disproportionately older, white, and male.
 - » In many places, state lawmakers have blocked local communities from raising their minimum wage, building affordable housing, or taking steps to protect people from COVID-19 – common-sense policies that remove historic barriers BIPOC communities consistently face.
- This is an abuse of preemption, and it's a tactic that – just like gerrymandering and voter suppression – is often used to take power away from communities traditionally shut out of decision making: BIPOC, immigrants, LGBTQ people, women, and working people.
 - » We've seen a dramatic increase in abusive preemption over the last decade by state leaders beholden to their corporate donors. That's because some state lawmakers are intentionally working to prop up racist structures that keep them in power. The power and prosperity of BIPOC, immigrants, LGBTQ people, women, and working people are a direct threat to their power and profits. *[Localize to the extent possible.]*
- Every community is unique and has needs that differ from their neighbors. Our local communities should have the ability they need to make the right decisions. It's time to call out this abuse of preemption for what it is: an attempt to further entrench inequitable and racist systems.

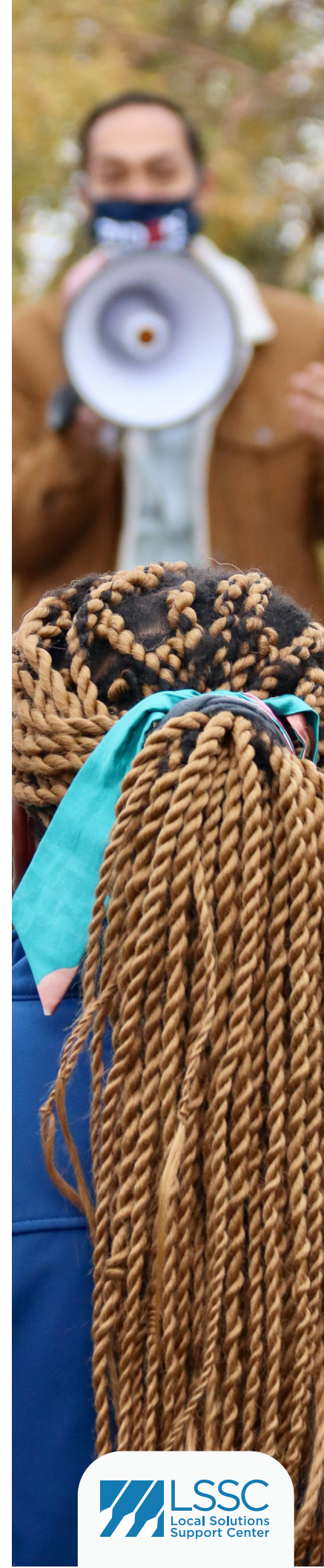
Talking about preemption as a threat to American democracy

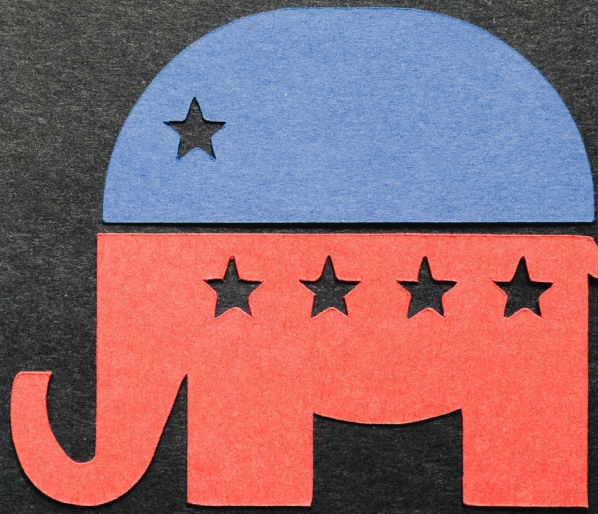
- Regardless of where you live, you should be able to trust that your local elected officials can make the right decisions about the issues affecting you and your loved ones. We elect our local officials to enact policies that protect our health, safety, and well-being. We all cherish our ability to participate in our democracy, and that starts right in our own backyard. *[If possible, tailor to a specific issue.]*
- Unfortunately, state lawmakers are increasingly putting the interests of their wealthy donors above doing what is best for us all. They pass unpopular laws and block local elected leaders who are just trying to do the right thing. These state lawmakers are not only undermining our local power – they’re damaging our democracy.
- More often than not, this undermining of local governments comes at the expense of policies designed to address unique and local needs. When local communities can’t enact policies to strengthen the local economy, protect public health and safety, or ensure residents have reliable internet access – we all lose.
- In order for our democracy to work, it has to work for all. Not just the ultra-wealthy. Addressing this interference with local decision-making is about restoring and protecting American democracy.



Talking about preemption to organizers

- Regardless of where you live, you should have the power to make your voice heard and work with your local elected officials on the priorities and policies that meet your community's needs. We know our communities best, and that's why we elect local officials and organize at the local level to advance policies that protect our health, safety, and well-being. *[If possible, tailor to a specific issue.]*
 - » We know from our work as organizers that every community is different – our histories, cultures, and economies are all different. That means the policies that may work best for one community just don't make sense for another.
- Those differences are why we're constantly organizing people and power within communities – so that we can pass the policies needed to ensure equity, health, and well-being.
 - » But recently, state lawmakers beholden to their corporate donors have worked overtime to take power away from local communities.
 - » In fact, our local communities have lost power over our own money, personnel and budgets, and authority to act across a widening range of issues in every single state legislative session since 2011.
- This is an abuse of preemption, and it's a tactic that – just like gerrymandering and voter suppression – is often used to take power away from communities traditionally shut out of decision making: BIPOC, immigrants, LGBTQ people, women, and working people.
- At the end of the day, ending abusive preemption will require changing the law in many states. Many advocates are organizing around home rule reform, which would update the legal framework governing the relationship between states and municipalities. *[Whenever possible, use a local call to action here in place of the home rule message – ie, support a repealer bill in your state; call your local elected officials to speak out against a specific preemption bill; etc.]*
- Change requires all of us to be engaged. Change is community-based – it will look different in different places, and it will reflect the specific needs of specific communities. But we all deserve to live in a place where our local elected officials have the power they need to make the right decisions. The first step in our journey is connecting the dots between corporate greed and preemption.





Talking about preemption to conservatives

- Our communities are strongest when government isn't interfering in our local affairs. We elect local leaders to enact policies that reflect our values, strengthen our local economies, and create the conditions for individuals and families to flourish.
 - » Our local elected officials are accountable to us. That's because they're typically our neighbors and the folks we run into at the grocery store or in the school pick-up line.
- Limited big government intervention is a bedrock conservative principle, and one that's essential to ensuring our families and communities can prosper. Unfortunately, there's a growing trend of state interference that is setting a dangerous precedent and undermining our freedom.
 - » This is because a number of state lawmakers are abusing preemption. Historically, preemption was used to set a policy floor that local elected officials could then build on as they saw fit.
 - » But more and more, some are using preemption to limit local policymaking, taking power away from constituents.
- More often than not, it's our fellow conservative state leaders who are abusing preemption at the behest of their corporate donors. This is short-sighted and not only runs contrary to our values, but sets a dangerous precedent that only enhances the size and power of government.
- We should trust people and the local leaders they elect to make the best decisions for our communities. Unfortunately, local communities have lost power to big government more and more each legislative session over the last decade.
- We have a duty to protect local decision-making from state interference and far-off special interests. We are the ones best equipped to make decisions related to our own lives, our families, and our communities. That means local governments need the ability to make local decisions free from interference.

Talking about preemption to local elected officials

- We trust our local elected officials to make the right decisions for our community – because we believe that our local leaders know the unique needs of our community best, and because we can easily hold them accountable.
 - » Most local elected officials run for office because they're motivated to make their local community even better, and they possess deep expertise on what works and what doesn't, and what is needed.
 - » *[If possible, tailor for the local elected + community you're speaking to.]*
- It's a safe bet that on more than one occasion, you've run into some challenges when trying to enact the policies you know your community needs. Those challenges may have originated from the state legislature, and you're not alone – over the last decade, we've seen a dramatic rise in state legislatures abusing preemption to undermine local officials like yourself, curtailing your ability to enact local policies and sometimes even threatening punitive action against you or your community if you buck the state's policy ceiling.
 - » This is not how our system of government is supposed to work. When you don't have the authority to enact policies designed to strengthen the local economy, protect public health and safety, or ensure residents have reliable internet access – we all lose.
 - » *[Tailor to specific local conditions.]*
 - » *[Consider layering in additional messaging here – for example, the role of corporate lobbying in driving preemption; or the disproportionate harm on BIPOC, immigrants, LGBTQ people, women, and working people.]*
- This abuse of preemption is a tactic that – just like gerrymandering and voter suppression – is often used to prop up the status quo and take power away from BIPOC, immigrants, LGBTQ people, women, and working people.
- We all have a role to play in enacting policies that advance equity, health, well-being, and safety. Your friends and neighbors are also your constituents – and they're looking to you to defend our local freedoms. Right now, that requires speaking out against abusive preemption and calling out how it's harming your ability to act on behalf of your constituents.





Talking about preemption to state elected officials

- Elected officials at every level of government hold enormous responsibility to their constituents. Research tells us that voters are most concerned about results, and how specific policies affect them and their families.
 - » Often, local elected officials are the leaders best equipped to make those local policies that people care so much about. That's because these local leaders know their communities best, they're most trusted by their friends and neighbors to make the right decisions, and they can easily be held accountable.
 - » Historically, states have set minimum health, safety, workplace, and well-being standards. And in the past, local governments could then localize and, when necessary, build on and strengthen state laws to meet the needs of their communities.
- Unfortunately, a growing number of state legislatures are overstepping their bounds and undermining local authority. The abuse of preemption is on the rise – and when voters learn how it impacts their own local power and decision-making abilities, they're usually not in favor of it.
 - » Over the last decade, local communities have lost more and more power to state legislatures as this sort of abusive preemption gains traction.
 - » This is a dangerous slope – this abuse of preemption erodes our democracy. When voters learn about how preemption is abused, they often see it for what it is: deep-pocketed corporations exerting their influence in the state capitol at the expense of the everyday constituent.
 - » *[Tailor to how preemption is unfolding in your state.]*
- Elected officials bear the responsibility of making sure government works for all people, at all levels. In this moment, that requires us to acknowledge and respect local authority.
- As more and more voters start to feel the harms of preemption in their own lives – and particularly on BIPOC, immigrants, LGBTQ people, women, and working people – both local and state elected officials are taking action to protect our democracy.
 - » *[Tailor with a local call to action – supporting a repealer bill; speaking out against a specific preemption measure pending in the legislature; etc.]*