

How to Influence Legislators and Legislation

Contact Them Directly

- You have the most influence with elected officials from your own district. If you can vote for – or against – someone, they will pay attention to your needs and concerns.
- Write to elected officials. Email and paper mail are both effective. Call them on the phone.
- Be specific. What do you want to happen and what do you want them to do? Cite specific bills.
- You can ask if there is legislation in your area of concern that would benefit from public comment.

Find and Work with Allies

An alliance of concerned citizens shows that your concern is more widespread. A disciplined message from a group of citizens can be very effective. Meetings should be small groups, though. Few elected officials want to host 20 people for a 15-minute office meeting.

Use Social Media and Traditional Media

Many legislators and officials monitor social media. You may be able to use Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to find allies, and to share messages to elected officials. Legislators monitor news in their districts. If your group has an event that makes the news, or if you are a guest on a TV program, it will come to their attention.

Contact Legislators When You can be Effective

When a topic you are concerned about becomes newsworthy, or when legislation is up for renewal are usually good times to act and voice your opinion.

Know About Models

If you're hearing about legislation that is being considered or has been passed in other states, it is a great idea to mention these items specifically. "(Another state) has a similar agenda and a bill was received favorably there. This is a good blueprint for what can be done in our state." As policies are more broadly adopted, other states may mirror such legislation. Once a policy has momentum in states, this legislation is more likely to become federal policy.