

HOW TO

Be An Effective Advocate In Your State Legislature

State legislatures are on the frontlines of the most pressing challenges to our freedoms, so it is vital for constituents to ensure their voices are heard by their state representatives. Here's how you can get involved in affecting legislation in your state!

WHO ARE MY STATE LAWMAKERS?

You can find your state legislators using the website openstates.org/find_your_legislator. You can use the search function provided to find your representatives by inputting your address as prompted.

WHAT IS THE BEST METHOD TO CONNECT WITH MY LEGISLATORS?



MEET WITH YOUR LEGISLATOR IN PERSON! Taking the time to meet with your legislator shows them how much you care about the bill. Check to see if an appointment is required, or if there's a good time for you to simply drop by your legislator's office. They are often more accessible than you realize.



CALL YOUR LEGISLATOR! Tell your legislator how you'd like them to vote on the bill and why. Legislators often use the number of phone calls they receive as a gauge for how important the bill is, which could factor into their vote.



SEND YOUR LEGISLATOR AN EMAIL OR LETTER! Putting your position in writing ensures you're making all the points you want to convey about the bill. Legislators receive far more emails than letters, so if you have the time to put pen to paper, that is likely to get even more attention.



TESTIFY BEFORE A COMMITTEE! Before a bill receives a vote from the full legislature, it must be approved by a committee. Legislative committees hold public hearings where the constituents and experts can testify as to why a bill should or should not be passed. If you will be personally affected by a bill, testifying at a committee hearing is a great way to make sure the decision-makers on the bill hear from you.

HELPFUL TIPS WHEN CONTACTING YOUR LEGISLATOR

- 1) Post on social media. Share an article or video about the bill, tag your legislators, and use hashtags to increase engagement on your post and get more attention for the bill.
- 2) Bring handouts to meetings (or create your own). A handout gives legislators a physical reminder of what you discussed in your meeting and can help inform their views on the bill.
- 3) Send a postcard. Legislative staff are busy and prefer not to have to take the time to open letters. A postcard allows them to quickly read your concerns about a bill.
- 4) Learn the legislative process. Every state has a unique process for enacting laws. Knowing that process can help you know the best times and people to engage.

HOW CAN I EFFECTIVELY ADVOCATE MY POSITION?



CONNECT WITH ALLIES! Most states have a family policy council or similar group that lobbies in support of pro-family, pro-life, and pro-religious freedom laws. Connecting with them can better equip you to be an effective advocate.



DO YOUR RESEARCH! Make sure you understand the bill and know why it should or shouldn't be passed. Look up common arguments against your own position and prepare responses to them.



MAKE YOUR MESSAGE CLEAR AND CONCISE! Be ready to make a specific call to action to your legislator. Do you want your legislator to vote yes or no on the bill? Do you want them to amend the bill? Choose 2-3 main points in support of your position and articulate them clearly and succinctly.



TELL A STORY! If you have a story of how the bill affects you or someone close to you, share it! Legislators want to know how a bill is going to impact their constituents personally.



BE CIVIL! Be polite even if your legislator doesn't share your position. It's easy to invoke harsh words when discussing an issue that you feel particularly passionate about with someone who may disagree. But this will likely reduce their willingness to listen to you in the future and may make them less open to changing their mind.



TIMING IS IMPORTANT! Monitor when your bill will be heard in committee or be up for a floor vote and contact your legislator ahead of that event. Your appeal will be fresh in their mind when deciding how they will vote.

HELPFUL TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY

- 1) Check with allied organizations in your state advocating your same position to see if they have summaries, talking points, FAQs, or articles about the legislation that you can use for your advocacy.
- 2) If you don't have your own connection to the bill, come prepared with an example of how the bill would affect someone else or how a similar bill has impacted another state.
- 3) Learn to track legislation. You can use free legislative tracking services like LegiScan to receive status alerts on bills you'd like to monitor. Some state allied organizations provide action alerts or newsletters that can help you stay up to speed on key bills.



Alliance Defending Freedom can provide resources on legislation concerning First Amendment freedoms in your state. Learn more at [ADFlegal.org/legislative](https://adflegal.org/legislative)

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