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YOUR FIGHT. YOUR VOICE.

CHANGEMAKER TOOLKIT

RESOURCES FOR
POLITICAL ADVOCACY



ACLU

We can all change South Dakota for the better.

Impact local politics by honing your communication skills and learning best practices for lobbying elected officials. A simple conversation can go a long way in the fight for our rights.

So, let's get talking.

Together, we will ensure our lawmakers protect our freedoms and defend our constitutional rights.



Have you ever found yourself thinking, “Wow, that’s terrible. I should really do something,” after reading the latest headlines about local politics or seeing your elected officials spoofed on “Saturday Night Live?”

Well, you definitely can. We’re here to help get you started.

Actions you can take today



- ✗ **Get to know your lawmakers**
Research their voting history if they’ve previously served in the legislature or local government. Take time to find out what they care about.
- ✗ **Connect with your lawmakers**
Calling, writing, and setting up in-person meetings with your lawmakers can make a huge impact. Consider attending in person events like rallies or Legislative Coffees and Cracker Barrels. By securing face time with policymakers you make the connection more personal and memorable.

Get your peers involved

Start talking about the importance of activism in all levels of government. If we want to change the political climate in South Dakota, it’s going to take all of us working together.

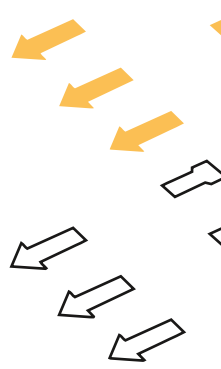
× RESEARCH YOUR × ELECTED × OFFICIALS

Establishing relationships with your elected officials is a vital part of creating long-lasting change.

In order to do so, it's important to do some initial research. The South Dakota legislature's website is a great resource for information on statewide elected officials. You can also connect with local elected officials through their respective government websites. (e.g. siouxfalls.gov).

TIPS FOR RESEARCHING

- Find your lawmaker's contact information
- Find your lawmaker's voting history
- Find out what committee(s) your lawmaker serves on or what issues they care about
- Listen to recorded or live meetings
- Attend public forums



CHECK LOCALLY FOR DETAILS



CALL YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

There are times when it's necessary to call your elected official to make a last-minute appeal on an impending vote or community concern.

In that case, you'll oftentimes be calling an office line which won't directly connect you with who you're trying to reach. That's why it's important to prepare what you're going to say ahead of time.

As with any other meeting or communication with your elected official, tact is key.

Remember to include the following things in your message: _____



Who you're calling: You'll need to know the name of the legislator or elected official you're trying to contact.

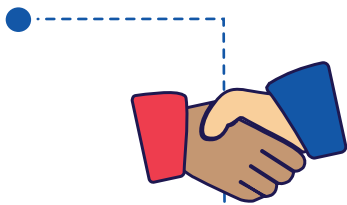
What you're calling about: State the community issue you're calling in reference to and what action you'd like your lawmaker to take. (e.g. "Please, stop attempts to ban books in my school.")

Say thank you to the person you speak with and leave your phone number or email for follow up. Let them know you will follow up within a week if you don't get a call back.

× MEET YOUR × ELECTED × OFFICIALS

Meeting your elected official in person is an effective way to talk to them about what matters to you.

In South Dakota, it is very likely that you have a personal connection to any member of elected office around the state. However, it's still OK to feel nervous about setting up a meeting with your elected officials or attending an in-person event.



SETTING UP A 1-1 MEETING WITH YOUR ELECTED OFFICIAL:

1. Schedule your meeting: Email, write, or call your elected official to request a meeting. When you do this, be sure to tell them what you want to talk about. If you're their constituent, tell them that. If you're bringing another constituent or someone else to the meeting, let them know that, too.

2. Be flexible, but firm: Give your elected official about seven days to respond to your request for a meeting, depending on the time of year they can be busy, but it is still their job to reply to you.

3. Be prepared: Before you get to the scheduled meeting, outline your conversation to the best of your ability. Come with three main points you want to hit and some "bonus" ones to get to if you have time and if the conversation is going well.

✕ WRITE YOUR ✕ ELECTED ✕ OFFICIALS

Letters and emails are a tried-and-true advocacy tactic.

With the exception of those in leadership roles, many elected officials have no staff or admin team. That means the majority of time, they're the ones who are answering when constituents write in.

The amount of mail an elected official gets on a certain issue can help determine its importance in their eyes.

As with any other meeting or communication with your elected official, timing, tact, and delivery is key.

LETTER WRITING TIPS

Keep it simple: Make your point quickly and directly.

Share your story and make it personal: Tell your elected official how their decisions affect you, your family, and your friends.

Problem, solution, action: In the letter or email be sure to include the problem, the solution, and the action you want taken (e.g. *"Trans kids are under attack and it is your duty to defend the people you were elected to represent. Vote NO on HB 123."*).

Tell them you'll be back: If you don't hear from your elected official in a timely manner, follow up with a phone call.



KEEP UP THE FIGHT AND MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD.

You have the power to change your community. Connecting with South Dakota's elected officials can make a huge difference.

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NEED HELP KEEPING UP WITH LOCAL POLITICS?

Get informed for the fight ahead at aclusd.org/alerts or scan the QR code below to get signed up for our email and text alerts.

