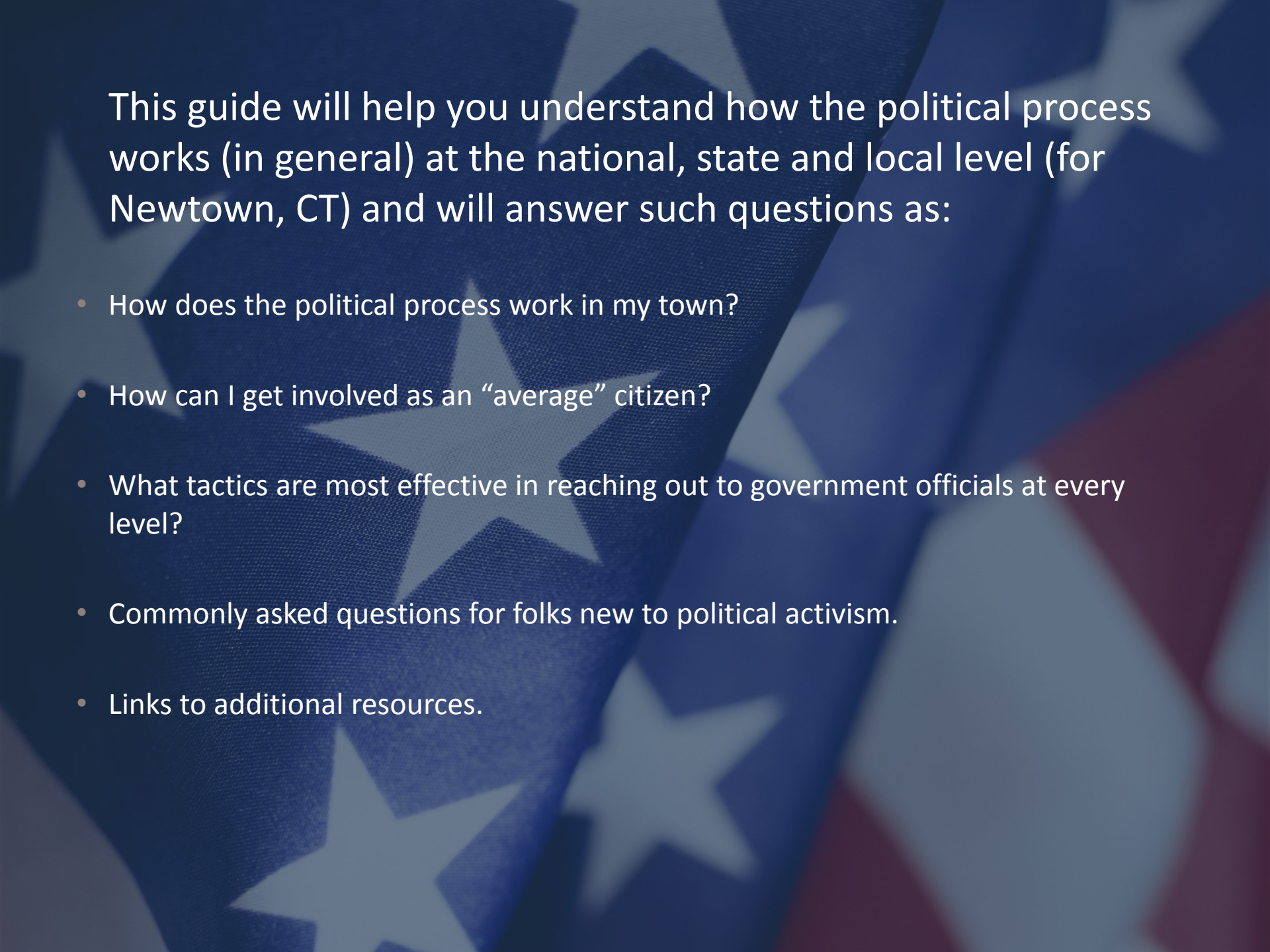




AN ACTIVIST GUIDE FOR *NEWTOWN FORWARD* NEWBIES

A guide to understanding how politics work,
how to get involved, and how you can have an impact
at the local, state and national level

The background of the slide is a close-up, slightly blurred image of the American flag, showing the stars and stripes in shades of blue, white, and red.

This guide will help you understand how the political process works (in general) at the national, state and local level (for Newtown, CT) and will answer such questions as:

- How does the political process work in my town?
- How can I get involved as an “average” citizen?
- What tactics are most effective in reaching out to government officials at every level?
- Commonly asked questions for folks new to political activism.
- Links to additional resources.

WHAT WE'LL COVER

1. Basic structure of politics starting at the local level
2. Ways you can get involved
3. How to make your voice heard



*Change will not come if we wait for
some other person, or if we wait for
some other time. We are the ones
we've been waiting for. We are the
change that we seek.*

Barack Obama

ABOUT *NEWTOWN FORWARD*

- On November 9th, 2016 a group of outraged and disbelieving Newtowners met to brainstorm ways we could support our families, our community, and most importantly each other, through these next four years. From this initial meeting, ***Newtown Forward*** was born – turning our outrage and disbelief into meaningful action.
- We are a group of motivated Newtown residents, convinced that the only way to build the resistance is from the ground up. We are the change we wish to see in the world. Find a subcommittee (at right) that resonates, and join us!
- Contact Rebekah Harriman-Stites at newtownforward@gmail.com to become a part of the Newtown Forward Community.
- Contact Shelley Northrop at shelleybnorthrop@gmail.com with any edits, suggestions, changes to this Activist Guide – all input and additions welcome!

PLEASE JOIN ONE OF OUR SUBCOMMITTEES:

ADVOCATES FOR DIVERSITY AND UNITY (ADU)

Contact: Robbin Chaber Allen (robbinredhead@Hotmail.com) and Jill Bracksieck (jbracksieck@gmail.com)

POLITICAL ACTION

Contact Prerna Rao (prerna.p.rao@gmail.com)

CLIMATE CHANGE

Contact Vanessa Villamil (vanvil77@aol.com)

YOUTH OUTREACH

Contact Jean Walter (jeanmariebridget@gmail.com)

MEDIA ADVOCACY

Contact Alex Copp (alex.z.copp@gmail.com)

A photograph of a church with a white steeple and a grey stone tower, situated on a hill covered in trees with autumn foliage. An American flag flies on a tall pole to the left of the church. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark blue filter.

UNDERSTANDING POLITICS IN NEWTOWN, CONNECTICUT

*"We need to build momentum
starting with our local communities."*

-Senator Chris Murphy

LOCAL POLITICS IN NEWTOWN, CT: AN OVERVIEW

BASIC STRUCTURE:

- Operates under a Charter
- Elected Board of Selectmen (3)
- Town elections are held every two years, odd years on Tuesday after the first Monday in November
- Officials take office on December 1 of that year

MAJOR TOWN ISSUES TO BE AWARE OF FOR 2017:

- Overall town budget
- Education budget/schools (closing schools)
- Fairfield Hills/Community Center
- Environmental/Land Use issues
- Majority of town leaders are Republicans
- Discuss referendums and elections – how do the budget referendums work? When are they?
- What do we want to do to influence politics in Newtown between now and the next election?
- We need to consider how we build a pipeline of smart, dedicated politicians starting at the local level



Tip: Next election will be November 7, 2017 for Selectmen, Board of Finance, and Legislative Council. The Board of Ed has four year terms that are staggered, so four Board of Ed seats will be voted on in 2017, and three in 2019.

Office	What they do	When they meet
Board of Selectmen	Supervise administration of town affairs	1 st and 3 rd Monday, 7:30 PM, Municipal Center
First Selectman	Chief Executive and Administrative Officer	
Legislative Council	Determines annual town budget and considers special and emergency appropriations	1 st and 3 rd Wednesday, 7:30 PM Municipal Center
Board of Finance	Recommends a budget proposal and submits to the Legislative Council	2 nd Monday and 4 th Thursday, 7:30 PM Municipal Center
Board of Education	Provides and maintains good public elementary and secondary schools and educational activities	1 st and 3 rd Tuesday, 7:30 PM, Municipal Center

NOTE: check the [newtown-ct.gov](http://www.newtown-ct.gov) website to confirm meeting dates and times.



Link to all Newtown Boards and Commissions:
www.newtown-ct.gov/boards



Link to minutes and agendas for all Newtown boards at www.newtown-ct.gov/minutes-and-agendas

Source: newtown-ct.gov

NEWTOWN BOARD OF SELECTMEN

WHAT THEY DO:

- Supervise the administration of Town affairs, except those matters which by General Statute or Town Charter are exclusively committed to the Board of Education or other department.
- Responsible for coordinating activities of all the departments of the Town and for reviewing the present and future needs of the Town.
- Submit annually to the Board of Finance a proposed budget, not including the Board of Education portion, for the next fiscal year.

HOW THEIR ACTIONS IMPACT YOU:

- Make decisions on town infrastructure, budgets, etc., which can directly impact the future of the town.
- Newtown currently has a Republican majority of elected officials, which could reinforce a Republican agenda and ideals.

HOW YOU CAN INFLUENCE THEIR DECISIONS:

- The first step would be to attend meetings to find out more about town matters, and review meeting notes that can be found on the Town of Newtown website, [Board of Selectmen Page](#).
- There is time set aside at the beginning and end of their scheduled meetings for voters to comment. This is a good opportunity to speak your mind about issues important to you.
- Make appointments to talk to your selectmen about issues that concern you.
- Communicate via email or letter on issues that concern you or to find out more about current/future issues and the Selectmen's positions on those issues.
- For concerted efforts, letters to the *Newtown Bee* can be effective.

	NAME	CONTACT INFO
R	LLODRA, E. PATRICIA	203-270-4201 pat.llodra@newtown-ct.gov 3 Primrose Street
R	RODGERS, WILLIAM F.L.	203-426-1941 SugrBrk@aol.com 208 Hattertown Road
D	ROSENTHAL, HERBERT C.	203-426-0660 herb.rosenthal@newtown-ct.gov 70 Main Street



Link to more information at
www.newtown-ct.gov/board-selectmen

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

WHAT THEY DO:

- The Legislative Council is responsible for analyzing/reviewing the annual town budget and considers special and emergency budget appropriations.

HOW THEIR ACTIONS IMPACT YOU:

- The town budget is one of the most important, and contested, issues the town considers.
- District 2 and 3 of the Legislative Council is heavily Republican.

HOW YOU CAN INFLUENCE THEIR DECISIONS:

- The first step would be to attend meetings to find out more about the Legislative Council, and review notes from past Legislative Council meetings.
- Attend meetings and make appointments to talk to your members of the Legislative Council about issues that concern you.
- There is time set aside at the beginning and end of their scheduled meetings for voters to comment. This is a good opportunity to speak your mind about issues important to you.
- Communicate via email or letter on issues that concern you.
- For concerted efforts, especially during the period when the budget is being considered, letters to the *Newtown Bee* can be effective.



Tip: In 2012, several concerned citizens put together a “*Citizen’s Guide to the Newtown Budget Process*” which provides an excellent overview of the Newtown Budget Process and is designed to help the average Newtown citizen better understand how the process works and how to get involved.

Link: <https://sites.google.com/site/newtownedbudgetguide/documents>

Link to more information at

www.newtown-ct.gov/legislative-council

DISTRICT 1

R	FERGUSON, GEORGE T. III	203-364-9917 georgeferguson@earthlink.net 49 Taunton Hill Road
D	EIDE, CHRISTOPHER C.	203-304-1968 chriseide4newtown@gmail.com 44 The Old Road
D	DeSTEFANO, JUDIT	203-304-9767 juditnewtownlc@gmail.com 12 Horseshoe Ridge Road
D	LUNDQUIST, PAUL J.	203-270-9787 lundquist.paul@gmail.com 148 Currituck Road

DISTRICT 2

R	KNAPP, RYAN	ryan.w.knapp@gmail.com 11 Jeremiah Road SH
D	HONAN, DANIEL T.	203-426-0714 danielthonan@gmail.com 60A Main Street
R	JACOB, MARY ANN	203-426-4404 mjacob4404@charter.net 65 Mohawk Trail SH
R	WIEDEMANN, DAN	203-426-1035 dgw0315@yahoo.com 13 Clearview Drive

DISTRICT 3

D	AMARAL, DANIEL J.	203-426-6038 amaralpoggy@aol.com PO Box 445, Newtown
R	CHAUDHARY, NEIL	203-240-6037 kc@4newtown.com 1 Southbrook Lane
R	FILIATO, ANTHONY	203-364-1161 tonyfiliato@ymail.com 24 Washbrook Road
R	CARROLL, PHIL	203-512-4120 ppcarroll13@gmail.com 1 Fieldstone Drive

NEWTOWN BOARD OF FINANCE

WHAT THEY DO:

- During the Annual Budget process, the Board of Finance conducts a public hearing, not later than the first Wednesday in March, on the budgets proposed by the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Education.
- The Board then holds working sessions to revise and/or approve the proposed budgets.
- Not later than March 14th, the Board must submit to the Legislative Council its recommended budget for the next fiscal year.

HOW THEY IMPACT YOU:

- The budget determines funding for schools, capital improvement projects, etc.
- Currently an even split between Democrats and Republicans.

HOW YOU CAN INFLUENCE THEIR DECISIONS:

- The public is encouraged to attend and give comments on the proposed budgets.
- There is time set aside at the beginning and end of their scheduled meetings for voters to comment. This is a good opportunity to speak your mind about issues important to you.
- Review the “*Citizen’s Guide to the Newtown Budget Process*” referenced on the previous page for more information.

	NAME	CONTACT INFO
D	GASTON, JAMES O.	203-426-2500 okjt@aol.com 18 Main Street
D	CARLSON, AARON	203-304-1485 aaron4newtown@gmail.com 2 Old Farm Hill Road
R	BOLAND, MARK SR.	203-426-7082 markbolandBOF@gmail.com 66 Taunton Hill Road
R	GODIN, JOHN	203-364-6012 jgodin1312@gmail.com 4 Quarry Ridge Rd
R	ROUSSAS, SANDY T.	Sandyroussas BOF@gmail.com 38 Maltbie Road
D	JOHNSON, KELLEY T.	203-491-0484 kellejtjohnson@gmail.com 16 Chestnut Hill Road

Link to more information at
www.newtown-ct.gov/board-finance



Source: Town of Newtown website: <http://www.newtown-ct.gov/board-finance>

BOARD OF EDUCATION

WHAT THEY DO:

Their overarching goal is to provide and maintain good public elementary and secondary schools and educational activities.

HOW THEY IMPACT YOU:

- High rates of student success are generally the result of three groups collaborating to provide the best opportunities for the future—teachers, parents, and the community. Research has shown that there is a significant positive correlation between school, family, and community involvement and student success.*
- According to a policy brief from the National Education Association (NEA), “when schools, parents, families, and communities work together to support learning, students tend to earn higher grades, attend school more regularly, stay in school longer, and enroll in higher level programs.”
- Research also suggests that good schools can positively impact real estate prices.

HOW YOU CAN INFLUENCE THEIR DECISIONS:

- The first step is to attend meetings to find out more about the Board of Education, and review notes from past board meetings.
- There is time set aside at the beginning and end of their scheduled meetings for voters to comment. This is a good opportunity to speak your mind about issues important to you.
- Talk to members of the Board of Ed about issues that concern you.
- Communicate via email or letter on issues that concern you, especially during the period when the Education Budget is being reviewed.

	NAME	CONTACT INFO
R	KEITH ALEXANDER	(203) 426-3256 8 Fawnwood Road SH
R	ANDREW CLURE	(203) 426-6911 24 Winton Farm Road
R	DANIEL CRUSON, JR.	(203) 240-4904 30A Dodgingtown Road
D	MICHELLE EMBREE KU	(203) 364-9862 28 Platts Hill Road
D	REBEKAH HARRIMAN-STITES	(203) 426-6693 5 Sealand Drive
R	DEBBIE MARTHA LEIDLEIN	(203) 982-3702 29 Little Brook Lane
D	JOHN N. VOUIROS	(203) 426-2000 29 Main Street

Link to more information at
www.newtown-ct.gov/board-education

Source: research study by Anne T. Henderson and Karen L. Mapp – A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement. <http://www.realtor.com/advice/buy/the-right-school-district-how-much-do-schools-affect-real-estate-prices/>

NEWTOWN DEMOCRATIC TOWN COMMITTEE

MORE ABOUT THE NEWTOWN DEMS:

- Currently led by Eric Paradis.
- They are actively looking for members and volunteers.
- Their goal is to help Newtown Democrats get involved, support Dems in local elections and help local Dems who are interested in being appointed to a local commission.
- The Committee meets the second Thursday of each month at 8PM in the Alexandria Room in Edmond Town Hall.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED:

- Attend a meeting!
- While anyone is welcome to attend meetings, if you want to be an official member, with voting rights, you will be interviewed by the Committee leadership before acceptance as a Committee member.
- Email the committee at newtownctdems@gmail.com.



Visit the Newtown Democratic Committee website at www.newtownctdemocrats.org

Follow the Newtown CT Dems social channels (links below):



Visit the **Connecticut Democratic Committee** website at ctdems.org. You can sign up for updates, stay up to date on CT issues, and find out more about the CT Democratic Party Platform.

Follow the State of CT Dems social channels (links below):



Tip: visit the National Democratic Party website at democrats.org. They have easy ways to gather research and advocate on issues with a click of your mouse!



FAQS ON NEWTOWN POLITICS

For local politics, does it really matter if the elected official is a Republican or Democrat?

Yes! Candidates tend to band together with other members of the same party during campaigns and while they are in office. Local politicians also gain name recognition and experience which may prove helpful to them in running for an office at the state level.

What is the most effective way to influence the decisions/actions for our local politicians?

There are several ways, but the single most important is to get involved, and attend town meetings to better understand the process and the issues our local politicians are grappling with. Once you have a solid understanding of the issues, you can meet with your elected officials to discuss your views and concerns, or voice your opinions at the town meetings.

What are the biggest issues Newtown Forward can influence locally this year?

The budget process (for the town and education) is always among the biggest issue facing the town each year. Further, supporting Democratic officials in office, and volunteering to serve on boards and committees can serve as a powerful means to build a pipeline of strong local candidates with like-minded views.

I am interested in running for office in the future, but I don't have any direct political experience. How do I find out about Town committees I could get involved with or appointed to in order to gain some political experience?

In Newtown, there are many committees that need dedicated volunteers. A good place to start to find out more is working with the Newtown Democratic Town Committee.

I would like to introduce myself to my elected officials. What is the best way to introduce myself?

While Town officials are always happy to meet their constituents, your conversation (and you) will probably be most productive if you meet with them to talk about an issue that is important to you.

I am not affiliated with any political party – what is the best way for me to become more involved?

Having no political affiliation does not exclude you from local politics! Attend town meetings, keep informed, volunteer to participate on town committees and support like-minded candidates.

The background image is a photograph of the Connecticut State Capitol building at dusk. The building is a large, ornate structure with a prominent central dome and several smaller towers. The sky is a deep blue, and the building's lights are on, creating a warm glow. The text "UNDERSTANDING POLITICS IN THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. The text is centered and framed by two horizontal white lines, one above and one below the text.

UNDERSTANDING POLITICS IN THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT

POLITICS IN CONNECTICUT

WHAT ARE THE BIG ISSUES FACING OUR STATE?

- Each year the Office of Legislative Research (OLR) presents a special report highlighting the major issues the CT General Assembly may face in the upcoming session. You can access the 2017 report here: www.cga.ct.gov/2016/rpt/pdf/2016-R-0296.pdf
- Business climate, affordable housing, public health (opioid abuse), the environment, gun violence, among other issues are listed. The Report provides links to reports and related documents about the issues.

WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST THREATS WE ARE FACING?

- The State is currently represented by Democrats, but the margins are small, and if there is any redistricting, the state could turn to a Republican majority.
- Dan Malloy has low approval rating (24%) reflecting voter dismay over the economy/budget – which opens the door for a Republican governor in the next election.

WHAT CAN I DO TO INFLUENCE?

- Support your Democratic elected officials!
- While it is important to voice your concerns and communicate with those elected officials who have views different from your own, it is equally important to support your elected officials whose views you support – they need to hear from you! Call, email, attend Town Hall meetings.

	NAME	CONTACT INFO
D	GOVERNOR MALLOY, DANIEL	(860) 566-4840 http://portal.ct.gov/Office-of-the-Governor
D	LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR WYMAN, NANCY	(860) 524-7384 http://portal.ct.gov/Office-of-the-Lt-Governor
D	SECRETARY OF STATE MERRILL, DENISE	(860) 509-6200 http://www.ct.gov/sots/site/default.asp
D	ATTORNEY GENERAL JEPSEN, GEORGE	(860) 808-5318 http://www.ct.gov/ag/site/default.asp



DID YOU KNOW?

The next CT Gubernatorial election is November 6, 2018

CT does not have gubernatorial term limits, so a candidate could run for a third term.

HOW TO FIND YOUR LEGISLATORS

- The State of Connecticut website has a handy look up tool that allows you to filter by town or your specific address to find your representative(s).
- You can then click on the Legislators name to access their websites and contact information.
- The results also allow you to view any bills they have introduced.

Visit www.cga.ct.gov/asp/menu/cgafindleg.asp to find your Legislators

You can also sign up to receive updates by text or email on bills that have been proposed and any updates, hearings, etc.

CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY
State Capitol | Hartford, Connecticut | 06106

Representation ▾ Committees ▾ Offices ▾ Commissions ▾ Session Items ▾ Statutes ▾ Bill Info ▾ Associated ▾

C G A / REPRESENTATION / FIND YOUR LEGISLATORS

Find Your Legislators

Town
Newtown

Street Name
Great Ring Road

Number
47

Find

Districts by Town

Congressional Districts

Find Your Legislators

47 Great Ring Road, Newtown

Name (Web) ↕	Title (Contact)	Party ↕	Bills ↕
J.P. Sredzinski	State Representative, District 112	Republican	14 Bills
Tony Hwang	State Senator, District S28	Republican	0 Bills
Richard Blumenthal	US Senator	Democrat	
Christopher Murphy	US Senator	Democrat	
Elizabeth Esty	US Congresswoman, 5th District	Democrat	

Districts by Town

Find Your Representative, Senator and Congressperson by Town

Filter:
newtown

Town ↕	House Districts ▾	Senate Districts ↕	Congressional Districts ↕
Newtown	Rep. Duff of the 2nd Rep. Bolinsky of the 106th Rep. Sredzinski of the 112th	Senator Hwang of the 28th	Esty of the 5th

U.S. CONGRESS FOR THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT

WHAT ARE THE BIG ISSUES?

While there are many issues of concern, several areas that have been suggested as areas of focus for *Newtown Forward* are:

- Cabinet Appointments
- ACA
- Gun Violence Protection
- Climate Change
- Women's Rights
- Immigration

WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST THREATS WE ARE FACING?

- Well, it sometimes feels like everything we value is under threat!
- The most important thing our group can do is focus on a few key issues, likewise, as individuals, it may feel overwhelming to try and tackle too many issues. Our suggestion is to focus your efforts on a few key areas that are of most importance to you.

WHAT CAN I DO TO INFLUENCE

- Call, write letters, and send emails to express your support or disagreement with issues.
- Attend Town Halls and any public meetings they host, and ask questions, and invite them to your own events and meetings.
- Make sure you've visited their websites and have signed up for their e-newsletters so you can follow their activities and the stands they are taking on issues.

REPRESENTATIVES		CONTACT INFO
D	DISTRICT 1 LARSON, JOHN	https://larson.house.gov/contact Hartford 860-278-8888 Washington, D.C. 202-225-2265
D	DISTRICT 2 COURTNEY, JOE	https://courtney.house.gov/contact Norwich 860-886-0139 Enfield 860-741-6011 Washington, D.C. 202-225-2076
D	DISTRICT 3 DELAURO, ROSA	https://delauero.house.gov/contact New Haven 203-562-3718 Washington, D.C. 202-225-3661
D	DISTRICT 4 HIMES, JIM	https://himes.house.gov/content/contact-me Bridgeport 866-453-0028 Stamford 203-353-9400 Washington, D.C. 202-225-5541
D	DISTRICT 5 ESTY, ELIZABETH	https://esty.house.gov/contact New Britain 860-223-8412 Washington, D.C. 202-225-4476

SENATORS		CONTACT INFO
D	MURPHY, CHRIS	https://www.murphy.senate.gov/about Hartford (860) 549-8463 Washington, D.C (202) 224-4041
D	BLUMENTHAL, RICHARD	https://www.blumenthal.senate.gov Hartford (860) 258-6940 Bridgeport (203) 330-0598 Washington, D.C. (202) 224-2823

FAQS ON POLITICS AT THE STATE LEVEL

If we have a democratic majority in Connecticut, do I need to show my support to my elected officials (send emails, support on social media, etc.) since I know they've got my back?

Yes! Even if the elected officials representing you agree with you on many of the issues, they still need to hear your voice. Their staff keeps track of the outreach on issues (positive and negative). Furthermore, by supporting/liking their posts on social media, you are helping to amplify the reach of their message, which is critically important.

What steps should I be taking at the state level now to ensure my candidates win in the next election?

Get involved with your local and state party organizations. Attend town meetings and get to know the local politicians who have aspirations for higher office. Volunteer to “doorbell” for candidates and causes. And of course, donate to their campaigns.

What is the best way to keep track of what my representatives are doing?

Go to their websites, sign up for their e-newsletters and follow their social channels. There are also excellent apps (such as “[Countable](#)” – see the Resources Section at the back) that help you keep track of issues and where Members of Congress stand.



ACTION STEPS YOU CAN TAKE

ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE – A SUMMARY

ACTION	COMMENTS/BEST TIME TO USE
Attend Town Hall Meetings	Elected officials (and the press) pay attention to the number of constituents that make the effort to attend Town Hall meetings, committee meetings, etc. If you are comfortable, prepare questions on the issues that are important to you. Share your participation on social media to amplify the reach of your support.
Send an Email to Your Legislator	This is an easy and effective way of communicating.
Send an Email to a Legislator Outside of your District/State	Many legislators will only accept and/or track letters/calls from constituents in their own districts. But that should not stop you from sending messages to legislators who are on committees on issues that are important to you. Sending strong messages to legislators who oppose your beliefs is important. But don't forget to send messages of support to those elected officials who are speaking out in support of your causes!
Mail a Letter	While most people send email, sending a hard copy mailing can also be effective, especially for select campaigns.
Write Letter to Editor	The "Letters" sections of newspapers and magazines are prime forums for getting your message to a wide audience. Letters to the editor in local and regional papers are read by local activists, government officials, legislators and community members.
Public Social Media Channels	Social media is becoming increasingly important in swaying public opinion. Follow the channels of your legislators, as well as the elected officials who are working for and against the causes you care about. Express your support, or disagreement, on their channels, and share with your own social networks.
Your Own Social Media Channels	Posting and sharing information and your positions on your own social media channels can increase awareness and influence your friends, and it helps to amplify reach on issues, but impact is dependent on the size and makeup of your friends groups/followers.
Attend Rally/March	Not only do rallies allow you to engage with like-minded individuals, they are an effective way of attracting press and showing the power and passion behind a movement. They can be extremely inspiring and effective.
Get Involved With Your Local Political Party	This can be one of the best ways to find out what is happening behind the scenes at the town and state level. Volunteering for your local political party can also be a great way to gain experience in politics to determine if you have the constitution and desire to enter politics and/or run for office.
Get Involved With and/or Follow Organizations You Care About	If you have a particular passion or concerns about a particular issue, follow organizations that support that issue. Many national organizations in particular have extremely effective and easy-to-use outreach methods and mechanisms that can make it easy to have an impact on Legislators and the press. Make sure you sign up for their email newsletters/action alerts, and follow their social channels.
Signing Petitions	National organizations and advocacy groups such as moveon.org circulate petitions to gain grassroots support for issues or causes and make it very easy to add your name and voice to causes you care about.

HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW AND HOW YOU CAN INFLUENCE THE PROCESS

HOW A BILL BECOMES LAW

The Bill is Written: Legislators create a working draft of the bill.

The Bill is Introduced: After a bill has been written, it is introduced into the House or Senate. The member that introduces the bill is its sponsor.

The Bill is Recorded: The bill is recorded and available to the public in the Congressional Record and on Congress' site on the internet.

The Bill is Assigned a Number: Bills introduced in the House and Senate are given numbers that are preceded by the initials H.R. and S, depending on where they are first submitted.

The Bill is Sent to Committee: Both houses of Congress have committees with different areas of expertise, such as Finance or Education. Bills are sent to committees with related expertise, which may also send the bills to sub-committees that have more focused expertise.

The Committee Reports to the House: After the committee process, bills are reported to the House of Representatives or Senate with any amendments that may have been added.

The Whole House Considers the Bill: At this point the House may do several things: send bills back to committee; amend bills and send them to the Senate; or send them to the Senate without amendment.

The Senate Considers the Bill: After bills move to the Senate, the Senate may do one of two things: pass the bills as they are or amend them and send them back to the House. Joint committees are formed to resolve any differences that occur when two versions of bills have been passed.

The Bill is Sent to the President: After the House and the Senate accepts identical bills, the President has 10 days to do one of two things: veto the bill or sign it into law. If the President does neither within 10 days, the bill becomes law without his or her signature (however, only if Congress is still in session at the end of those 10 days).

HOW YOU CAN INFLUENCE THE PROCESS

Affecting a bill at this stage requires a developed, close relationship with a legislator.

Make a note of who sponsors each bill, because this can give you clues about the bill's content and who will support it.

Many organizations will independently review the bill and offer their opinions on the bill to the public.

You can track any bill's status on Congress' internet site if you have its corresponding number. If you do not know the number, you can find it using key words.

Bills are the most flexible and open to advocacy efforts at this time. You can affect a bill by testifying at hearings, or by finding out which legislators are on each committee through the House (www.house.gov) and Senate (www.senate.gov) websites. You can contact committee members and express your thoughts and opinions. Committees can hold public hearings, where anyone concerned may testify about the bills.

The media is likely to start coverage of bills at this point. This may be a good time to influence media coverage by writing letters to the editor and contacting media representatives with your thoughts and opinions.

You can direct efforts to advocate for any of these actions.

At this point, you can advocate for either action by the Senate by contacting your Senator via email or phone.

Contact the President to try to influence his or her decision by calling 202-456-1111 or emailing www.whitehouse.gov.

Source: National Education Association www.nea.org

HOW TO REACH THE PRESIDENT

ARE THERE ANY EFFECTIVE WAYS TO INFLUENCE PRESIDENT TRUMP?

- Well, it may be too soon to tell, but so far, Trump has done a pretty effective job of ignoring regular forms of communication to the President.
- He does seem to be influenced by what the press has to say, so any way to attract press coverage (protests, etc.) could have an impact.

You can try to reach President Trump through the following social channels and websites:

- [@realDonaldTrump](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump)
- [@POTUS](https://twitter.com/POTUS)
- www.facebook.com/WhiteHouse
- www.whitehouse.gov
- www.whitehouse.gov/contact You can sign up for updates from the President (if you can stomach those).

The New York Times reported that President Obama would receive tens of thousands of letters, emails and faxes every day. His staff would cull through those communications and painstakingly select several to be placed in President Obama's briefing book each weeknight. This was designed to give him a sampling of what Americans are thinking.

Mr. Obama would read these letters, and sometimes respond with a handwritten note (several examples can be found on the New York Times website).

Sadly, this does not seem to be a tactic that will be used by President Trump. Given what we've seen so far, you may get more response from a tweet!

EXECUTIVE ORDERS AND OUR NEW PRESIDENT

WHAT IS AN EXECUTIVE ORDER AND WHERE DOES THE PRESIDENT GET THE AUTHORITY TO USE THEM? IS THERE ANY WAY TO REVERSE THEM?

Executive Orders (EOs) are legally binding orders given by the President, acting as the head of the Executive Branch, to Federal Administrative Agencies. Executive Orders are generally used to direct federal agencies and officials in their execution of congressionally established laws or policies. However, in many instances they have been used to guide agencies in directions contrary to congressional intent.

Executive Orders do not require Congressional approval to take effect but they have the same legal weight as laws passed by Congress. The President's source of authority to issue Executive Orders can be found in the Article II, Section 1 of the Constitution which grants to the President the "executive Power." Section 3 of Article II further directs the President to "take Care that the Laws be faithfully executed." To implement or execute the laws of the land, Presidents give direction and guidance to Executive Branch agencies and departments, often in the form of Executive Orders.

A BRIEF HISTORY AND EXAMPLES

Many important policy changes have occurred through Executive Orders. Harry Truman integrated the armed forces under EO. President Eisenhower used an EO to desegregate schools. Presidents Kennedy and Johnson used them to bar racial discrimination in federal housing, hiring, and contracting. President Reagan used an EO to bar the use of federal funds for advocating abortion. President Clinton reversed this order when he came into office (which Trump has reversed again.)

CONTROVERSY

Executive Orders are controversial because they allow the President to make major decisions, even law, without the consent of Congress. This, of course, runs against the general logic of the Constitution -- that no one should have power to act unilaterally. Nevertheless, Congress often gives the President considerable leeway in implementing and administering federal law and programs. Sometimes, Congress cannot agree exactly how to implement a law or program. In effect, this leaves the decision to the federal agencies involved and the President that stands at their head. When Congress fails to spell out in detail how a law is to be executed, it leaves the door open for the President to provide those details in the form of Executive Orders.

CONGRESSIONAL RECOURSE

If Congress does not like what the executive branch is doing, it has two main options. First, it may rewrite or amend a previous law, or spell it out in greater detail how the Executive Branch must act. Of course, the President has the right to veto the bill if he disagrees with it, so, in practice, a 2/3 majority is often required to override an Executive Order.

Congress is less likely to challenge EOs that deal with foreign policy, national defense, or the implementation and negotiation of treaties, as these are powers granted largely to the President by the Constitution. As the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, the President is also considered the nation's "Chief Diplomat." In fact, given national security concerns, some defense or security related EOs (often called National Security Directives or Presidential Decision Directives) are not made public.

In addition to congressional recourse, Executive Orders can be challenged in court, usually on the grounds that the Order deviates from "congressional intent" or exceeds the President's constitutional powers. In one such notable instance, President Harry Truman, was rebuked by the Supreme Court for overstepping the bounds of presidential authority. After World War II, Truman seized control of steel mills across the nation in an effort to settle labor disputes. In response to a challenge of this action, the Supreme Court ruled that the seizure was unconstitutional and exceeded presidential powers because neither the Constitution or any statute authorized the President to seize private businesses to settle labor disputes. For the most part, however, the Court has been fairly tolerant of wide range of executive actions.

Sites Providing Access to Executive Orders

[Executive Orders Disposition Tables \(Federal Register\);
https://www.archives.gov/federal-register/executive-orders](https://www.archives.gov/federal-register/executive-orders)

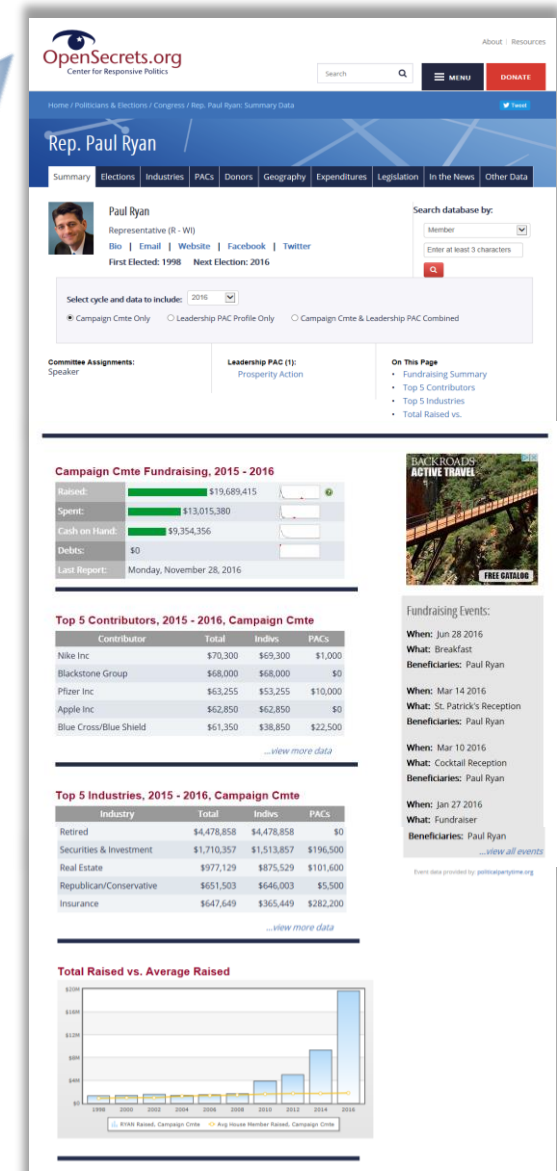
Source: Contributing Author: Jeffrey C. Fox, [Catowba College](http://www.thisnation.com/question/040.html); <http://www.thisnation.com/question/040.html>

HOW TO DO YOUR RESEARCH ON YOUR LEGISLATORS

BEGIN WITH THESE FIVE STEPS TO GATHER INTEL.

Take the following five steps to arm yourself with information necessary for your advocacy activities.

1. Find your elected representatives, their official websites, and their office contact info in the earlier sections of this document or on www.callmycongress.com.
2. Sign up on representatives websites to receive regular email updates, invites to local events, and propaganda to understand what they're saying. Every Member of Congress has an e-newsletter.
3. Find out where your representatives stands on the issues of the day. Review their voting history at votesmart.org. Research their biggest campaign contributors at opensecrets.org.
4. Set up a Google News Alert (<http://www.google.com/alerts>) — for example for “Senator Chris Murphy” — to receive an email whenever your Elected Official is in the news.
5. Follow your representatives (at all levels) on social media to keep track of their activities and positions.



Sources: Indivisible: A Practical Guide for Resisting the Trump Agenda <http://www.occupy.com/article/indivisible-practical-guide-resisting-trump-agenda#tshash.1C8YEiU9.xfm8q56r.dpbs>

HOW TO MEET WITH AN ELECTED OFFICIAL IN PERSON

HOW TO SET UP AN APPOINTMENT:

- Your first step is to call or send an email. Let them know what issue you would like to discuss and the window of time you are available to meet.
- For Members of Congress, you can meet them in your home state, or at their Washington, D.C. office.
- Make sure you let them know who will be attending the meeting.

TIPS FOR YOUR MEETING:

- If you go in a group, determine who will do the speaking ahead of time.
- Stay focused. Do not get angry or go off on tangents, but show your passion and concern.
- Be prepared with talking points that address how your concerns affect families, money, and jobs, and the benefits to the state or nation.
- Be prepared to answer questions.
- Be specific about what you are asking them to do (e.g., support legislation, increase funding, co-sponsor or sponsor a bill).
- Take notes on what they said.
- Follow-up after the appointment.
- Share what you learned, and what they said, after the meeting with your social channels.

HOW TO CALL YOUR LEGISLATORS

CALLING IS EASY, AND IT CAN ACTUALLY HAVE AN IMPACT

Prepare a single question per call. Keep it simple. The question should be about a live issue — e.g. a vote that is coming up, a chance to take a stand, or some other time-sensitive opportunity.

Find out who you're talking to. In general, the staffer who answers the phone will be an intern, a staff assistant, or some other very junior staffer in the Member of Congress' office. But you want to talk to the legislative staffer who covers the issue you're calling about. There are two ways to go about doing this:

- » Ask to speak to the staffer who handles the issue (immigration, health care etc). Junior staff are usually directed to not tell you who this is, and instead just take down your comment instead.
- » On a different day, call and ask whoever answers the phone, "Hi, can you confirm the name of the staffer who covers [immigration/health care/ etc]?" Staff will generally tell you the name. Say "thanks!" and hang up. Ask for the staffer by name when you call back next time.

If you're directed to voicemail, follow up with email. Getting more senior legislative staff on the phone is tough. The junior staffer will probably just tell you "I checked, and she's not at her desk right now, but would you like to leave a voicemail?" Go ahead and leave a voicemail, but don't expect a call back. Instead, after you leave that voicemail, follow up with an email to the staffer. If they still don't respond, follow up again. If they still don't respond, let the world know that the MoC's office is dodging you.

Keep a record of the conversation. Take detailed notes on everything the staffer tells you. Direct quotes are great, and anything they tell you is public information that can be shared widely. Compare notes with the rest of your group, and identify any conflicts in what they're telling constituents.

Report back to media and your group. Report back to both your media contacts and your group what the staffer said when you called.

Find the phone numbers for your Members of Congress

You can find your local MoCs and their office phone numbers at www.callmycongress.com.

How to find an email address for a staffer if you want to follow up a phone conversation with an email:

Congressional emails are standardized, so even if the MoC's office won't divulge that information, you can probably guess it if you have the staffer's first and last name.

- **Senate email addresses:** For the Senate, the formula is: StafferFirstName_StafferLastName@MoCLastName.senate.gov. For example, if Jane Doe works for Senator Roberts, her email address is likely "Jane_Doe@roberts.senate.gov"
- **House email addresses:** For the House, the formula is simpler: StafferFirstName.StafferLastName@mail.house.gov. For example, if Jane Doe works in the House, her email address is likely "Jane.Doe@mail.house.gov"

NOTE TO INTROVERTS!

We know that calling can be daunting, but you don't need to be persuasive. Your main goal is to put yourself on the tally that will be passed along to the representative. You don't have to convince anyone and no one will argue with you. You can be as awkward as you want, they won't care!

Sources: <http://actionfriday.tumblr.com/post/153358069831/shy-persons-guide-to-calling-representatives>

Indivisible: A Practical Guide for Resisting the Trump Agenda <http://www.occupy.com/article/indivisible-practical-guide-resisting-trump-agenda#sthash.1C8YEiU9.xfm8q56r.dpbs>

SAMPLES OF HOW TO STRUCTURE A CALL TO YOUR LEGISLATOR

Staffer Congresswoman Sara's office, how can I help you?

Staffer I'm happy to take down any comments you may have. Can I ask for your name and address to verify you're in the Congresswoman's district?

Staffer Yes, this is Jeremy Smith.

Staffer I really appreciate you calling and sharing your thoughts! I of course can't speak for the Congresswoman because I'm just a Staff Assistant, but I can tell you that I'll pass your concerns on to her.

Staffer I'm afraid we don't take positions on personnel appointments.

Staffer Personnel appointments are the President's responsibility. We have no control over them.

Staffer As I said, this is the President's responsibility. It's not our business to have a position on who he chooses for his staff.

Staffer I'll pass that on.

Caller Hi there, I'm a constituent of Congresswoman Sara's. Can I please speak with the staffer who handles presidential appointments issues?

Caller Sure thing. [Gives name/address]. Can I ask who I'm speaking with?

Caller Thanks, Jeremy! I'm calling to ask what the Congresswoman is doing about the appointment of Steve Bannon to serve in the White House. Bannon is reported as saying he didn't want his children to go to a school with Jews. And he ran a website that promoted white nationalist views. I'm honestly scared that a known racist and anti-Semite will be working feet from the Oval Office. Can you tell me what Congresswoman Sara is going to do about it?

Caller I appreciate that Jeremy, but I don't want you to just pass my concerns on. I would like to know what the Congresswoman is doing to stop this. [If they stick with the "I'm just a staffer" line, ask them when a more senior staffer will get back to you with an answer to your question.]

Caller Why not?

Caller But Congresswoman Sara has the ability to speak out and say that this is unacceptable. Other members of Congress have done so. Why isn't Congresswoman Sara doing that?

Caller It is everyone's business if a man who promoted white supremacy is serving as an advisor to the President. The Congresswoman is my elected representative, and I expect her to speak out on this.

Caller I find it unacceptable that the Congresswoman refuses to take a position. I'll be notifying my friends, family, and local newspaper that our Congresswoman doesn't think it's her job to represent us or actually respond to her constituents' concerns.

SAMPLES OF HOW TO STRUCTURE A CALL TO YOUR LEGISLATOR

Start with an introduction. *Hi my name is _____ and I'm a constituent of Rep./Sen. _____ calling about a concern I have.*

Have a script. *This is the best way to keep focused and calm. Say what you are comfortable saying. Remember, you are just calling to be counted.*

Expect their response. *Most of the time they will just tell you they will pass on your concern. They might read a prepared statement in response. They might even say that your rep is not going to take action on the issue you brought up.*

What they WON'T do is argue with you or say, "what a stupid thing to be concerned about." Don't let your anxious brain convince you they will do this.

*If necessary, **reiterate your request.** If they read a statement or say the representative will not take action, don't get flustered. Just say, Once again, I'm calling on the Rep./Sen. to _____.*

Thank the staffer and hang up.

[Senator/Representative]'s district and I would like to speak with the Senator/Representative.

I am calling to talk with you about [name the issue]. I am very concerned about [describe, e.g., high quality, affordable childcare is an important part of my everyday life and without adequate support and funding, paying the high cost of childcare is almost impossible. If I cannot afford childcare, I cannot work. I urge you to support the [name the bill/issue].

Can you tell me where you stand on this issue?

Thank you very much for your time.

Hello, my name is [name] and I live in [town, state]. Can I speak to the person in your office who handles cabinet nominations?

I am calling to support/oppose [name] nomination for [office]. I urge you to vote against his/her confirmation. [Describe reasons why].

Thank you very much for your time.

Hello, my name is [name] and I live in

FAQS ON CALLING ELECTED OFFICIALS

Will I actually talk to my elected official? Or will it be a staff person?

Most often you will be talking to a staff person or intern in the Member's office. Staff members are responsible for keeping track of how many people called and keep a tally on their positions on issues. Then they provide a summary of the calls and communications to the Legislator.

What is the best time to call?

Whenever possible, make your calls, send your emails, and schedule your meetings for times when Congress is NOT in session and actively debating legislation. Mondays, Friday afternoons, the day immediately after any holiday, the month of August, and the week after Christmas are the worst times for you to try to make contact. That's because these times are reserved for staff and congressional meetings, the MoC's travel to D.C., staff vacations, special projects, field hearings, campaign work, and other non-legislative issues.

Can I call elected officials who don't represent me, if I know they are on a committee or have introduced a Bill or are outspoken on an issue I care about?

Yes. Most MoCs generally pay more attention to their own constituents, and may ignore you if live outside of their state/district. HOWEVER, it is important to call party leadership and committee members on relevant issues.

What if I get voicemail? Should I leave a message?

Yes. Voicemails are tracked as well. Just make sure you leave a complete message with your name, address, and the issue you are calling about.

Here's an example of the type of tally sheet staffers use to tabulate communications and report to their Member of Congress

Phone Call and Mail Report

To: Senator [REDACTED]
From: [REDACTED]
Date: Week of May 14, 2007

With several controversial bills on – or coming to – the Senate floor, we received a lot of calls and mail during the past week. Every morning, the voice mailbox has been full of calls from the night before.

Calls:

Please vote for comprehensive immigration reform
We need to secure the border and build a fence
Throw all undocumented people out of the U.S.
Enforce immigration laws/no amnesty
Impeach President Bush
End global hunger
Co-sponsor S. 1418 (health care for women and kids in poor countries)
Provide federal support for stem cell research
Get the U.S. out of Iraq
Support the President's Iraq policy
Eliminate military "don't ask, don't tell" rules

Mail and E-mail

Make English the national language	14
Get the U.S. out of Iraq immediately	237
Get rid of V.P. Cheney	4
No war against Iran	1
Increase funding for NIH	4
Expand the NASA space program	2
Co-sponsor S.1418	4
America has too many immigrants	12
End the "gun show" loophole	3
Support the Millennium Project	6
Build a fence and enforce immigration laws	62
No amnesty for undocumented worker	122
Eliminate the NSA wiretapping	4
Remove Attorney General Gonzalez from office	3
Stop paying U.N. dues	2
Vote to increase car fuel efficiency	6

Sources: <http://www.votility.com/blog/bid/267541/The-Best-Methods-to-Reach-Your-Congressman-From-an-Insider-Point-of-View>; Borgenproject.org

TOWN HALLS/LISTENING SESSIONS

Members of Congress regularly hold local “Town Halls” or public listening sessions throughout their districts or state. They are a good way to directly pressure your Members of Congress and to attract media to your cause.

FIND OUT WHEN YOUR MOC’S NEXT PUBLIC TOWN HALL EVENT IS.

Sometimes these are announced well in advance, and sometimes they are “public” but only sent to select constituents through mailings shortly before the event. If you can’t find announcements online, call your MoC directly to find out. When you call, be friendly and say to the staffer, “Hi, I’m a constituent, and I’d like to know when his/her next town hall forum will be.” If they don’t know, ask to be added to the email list so that you get notified when they do.

DO YOUR RESEARCH: REVIEW THE MOCS VOTING RECORD.

Look at voting record and understand where they stand on the issues

PREPARE SEVERAL QUESTIONS AHEAD OF TIME.

Your questions should be sharp and fact-based, ideally including information on the MoC’s record, votes they’ve taken, or statements they’ve made.

YOU CAN RECORD EVERYTHING!

You can record advocates asking questions and the MoC’s response. While written transcripts are nice, unfavorable exchanges caught on video can be devastating for MoCs. These clips can be shared through social media and picked up by local and national media.



SHOULD I BRING A SIGN?

Signs can be useful for reinforcing the sense of broad agreement with your message. However, if you’re holding an oppositional sign, staffers will almost certainly not give you or the people with you the chance to get the mic or ask a question. If you have enough people to both ask questions and hold signs, though, then go for it!



SAMPLE QUESTION FOR TOWN MEETING

“I and many district families in [town] rely on Medicare. I don’t think we should be rationing health care for seniors, and the plan to privatize Medicare will create serious financial hardship for seniors who can’t afford it. You haven’t gone on the record opposing this. Will you commit here and now to vote no on Bill X to cut Medicare?”

TOWN HALL MEETING: ADVICE FOR GROUPS

GET THERE EARLY, MEET UP, AND GET ORGANIZED.

Meet outside or in the parking lot for a quick huddle before the event. Distribute the handout of questions, and encourage members to ask the questions on the sheet or something similar.

GET SEATED AND SPREAD OUT.

Head into the venue a bit early to grab seats at the front half of the room, but do not all sit together. Sit by yourself or in groups of two, and spread out throughout the room. This will help reinforce the impression of broad consensus.

MAKE YOUR VOICES HEARD BY ASKING GOOD QUESTIONS.

When the MoC opens the floor for questions, everyone in the group should put your hands up and keep them there. Look friendly or neutral so that staffers will call on you.

SUPPORT THE GROUP AND REINFORCE THE MESSAGE.

After one member of your group asks a question, everyone should applaud to show that the feeling is shared throughout the audience. Whenever someone from your group gets the mic, they should note that they're building on the previous questions — amplifying the fact that you're part of a broad group.



TIPS FOR ASKING QUESTIONS

- **Stick with the prepared list of questions.** Don't be afraid to read it straight from the printout if you need to.
 - **Be polite but persistent, and demand real answers.** MoCs are very good at deflecting or dodging questions they don't want to answer. If the MoC dodges, ask a follow-up question. If they aren't giving you real answers, call them out for it. Other group members around the room should amplify by either booing the MoC or applauding you.
 - **Don't give up the mic until you're satisfied with the answer.** If you've asked a hostile question, a staffer will often try to limit your ability to follow up by taking the microphone back immediately after you finish speaking. They can't do that if you keep a firm hold on the mic. No staffer in their right mind wants to look like they're physically intimidating a constituent, so they will back off. If they object, then say politely but loudly: "I'm not finished. The MoC is dodging my question. Why are you trying to stop me from following up?"
 - **Keep the pressure on.** After one member of the group finishes, everyone should raise their hands again. The next member of the group to be called on should move down the list of questions and ask the next one.
-

AFTER THE TOWN HALL

REACH OUT TO MEDIA, DURING AND AFTER THE TOWN HALL.

If there's media at the town hall, the people who asked questions should approach them afterwards and offer to speak about their concerns. When the event is over, you should engage local reporters on Twitter or by email and offer to provide an in-person account of what happened, as well as the video footage you collected.

Ensure that the members of your group who are directly affected by specific threats are the ones whose voices are elevated when you reach out to media.

SHARE EVERYTHING.

Post pictures, video, your own thoughts about the event, etc., to social media afterwards. Tag the MoC's office and encourage others to share widely.



Example Twitter outreach:

.@reporter I was at Rep. Smith's town hall in Springfield today. Large group asked about Medicare privatization. I have video & happy to chat.

Tip: It's important to make this a public tweet by including the period before the journalist's Twitter handle. Making this public will make the journalist more likely to respond to ensure they get the intel first.

HOW TO WRITE AN EFFECTIVE LETTER TO LEGISLATORS

Letters and e-mails can be particularly effective in influencing legislators' views. It can allow you to maintain contact and keep your issues on the front burner even when you cannot meet personally.

KEEP IT BRIEF

Keep to one page. Try to discuss only one bill or issue in a letter.

IDENTIFY YOURSELF

Begin with an introduction of yourself or the organization on whose behalf you are writing. Use a simple statement, such as "I am a third-grade teacher at (name) school" or "On behalf of the members of the (group name)...."

GET TO THE POINT

Follow your introduction with a brief statement of your issue or concern, such as "We urge your support for (issue), which will (your concern)." If you are writing in reference to a specific bill, include the bill number. Follow your opening paragraph with a concise explanation of why you support or oppose the particular bill or issue. A few strong, well-thought-out arguments are much more effective than a laundry list of reasons to support or oppose a bill. Use bullet points to outline your arguments.

RELATE IT TO HOME

Help the legislator understand why your position is important to his or her constituents. Include specific facts about how a bill will impact people in the legislator's district. If possible, include a local anecdote illustrating the problem you are seeking to address. *Avoid the use of form letters or generic postcards* — use your own knowledge and experience to inform the legislator. Use your personal experience and voice.

THE PROPER WAY TO ADDRESS LETTERS TO...

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

Envelope, official: President (full name)

The White House

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.

Washington, DC 20500

Salutation: *Dear Mr./Madam President:*

UNITED STATES SENATORS

Envelope: The Honorable (full name)

United States Senate

Washington, DC 20510

Salutation: *Dear Senator (last name)*

FOR MEMBERS OF THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Envelope: The Honorable (full name)

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

Salutation: *Dear Representative (last name)*

Sources: National Education Association www.nea.org; CT State Civics Toolbox: http://www.ctn.state.ct.us/civics/proper_address.asp; formsofaddress.info

HOW TO WRITE AN EFFECTIVE LETTER TO LEGISLATORS, CONT'D

ALLOW FOR FOLLOW-UP

Include specific contact information and offer to act as a resource should the legislator or staff have questions or need additional information. Where appropriate, state in the letter that you will follow up with a telephone call.

ADDRESS YOUR LETTER CORRECTLY

Be respectful and follow protocol. See sidebars for details.

WHEN USING EMAILS...

E-mail can be an easy and effective tool for communicating with legislators. The tips outlined previously for writing letters to legislators also apply to e-mails: keep them brief and to the point, with facts and anecdotes relevant to the legislator's district.

AVOID INFORMAL LANGUAGE

E-mail to a legislator should be treated as seriously as a written letter. Resist the temptation to use the informal language and symbols often associated with e-mail communications. Never use impolite language or make "demands."

INCLUDE YOUR FULL ADDRESS AND ZIP CODE

Make sure the text of your e-mail includes your full name and street address, including zip code. Many legislative offices screen e-mails for address information identifying the sender as a constituent. E-mails that appear to come from outside the district are unlikely to be read and may be blocked by filtering programs.

THE PROPER WAY TO ADDRESS LETTERS TO...

THE GOVERNOR OF CONNECTICUT

Envelope: His/Her Excellency, The Honorable (full name)

Governor, State of Connecticut

Executive Chambers, The Capitol

Hartford, Connecticut 06106-1591

Salutation: Dear Governor (full name)

STATE SENATOR

Envelope: The Honorable (full name)

State Senate

Legislative Office Building

Hartford, Connecticut 06106-1591

Salutation: Dear Senator (full name)

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Envelope: The Honorable (full name)

State House of Representatives

Legislative Office Building

Hartford, Connecticut 06106-1591

Salutation: Dear Representative (full name)

DOS AND DON'TS OF LETTER WRITING

✓ **Do be personal, thoughtful, specific, and concise.** Your letters should be written with the expectation that they will be read by someone of sensitivity and intelligence, but who may be slightly less well informed than you are on your particular issue.

✓ **Do spell your legislator's name correctly** and know whether he/she is a senator or delegate. All should be addressed as "The Honorable."

✓ **Do write as an individual constituent.** Because legislators pay the most attention to personal letters from their constituents, it is important that your letter express your own views. To make this clear, it will help to use personal stationary rather than a postcard or form letter, express your views in your own words rather than those of another, and refer to previous communications with the member, if possible.

✓ **Do write one page or less.** Because legislators are so busy, they do not have much time to read through a long, involved letter in order to discover your point. If your letter is limited to one page, they can scan it more quickly. If you have more information than will fit on one page, include it as background material, clearly marked as such and attached to the letter.

✓ **Do cover only one subject and clearly identify it as such.** For example, at the top of the page, below the date write "Re: name of the bill or issue." This will speed up the routing of the letter in the office. If you have more than one subject which you would like to cover, then write a separate letter for each one.

✓ **Do be as specific as possible.** Regardless of what you are writing about, be as specific as possible in describing it. If it is a particular

bill, try to refer to its number, the person who introduced it, and what it will do. Similarly, if you refer to the position of the delegate, it will demonstrate your specific interest in his/her actions. Show as much knowledge as you can, but don't hesitate to write merely because you are not an "expert."

✓ **Do make your letter timely.** Try to ensure that your letter arrives while the issue is alive. Your legislator will appreciate having your views and information while the bill is before him/her.

✓ **Do ask the legislator to do something specific.** It is important to ask for a specific action such as: "Please vote for"

✓ **Do include your name and return address** on the letter. Do type letters if possible, but handwritten letters are fine if they are legible. Write each legislator individually, avoiding photocopies or carbons.

✓ Do write to your own senator and delegate and to others whom you know personally.

✓ Don't write a letter that demands or insists the legislator vote for or against a certain bill.

✓ Don't write a chain letter or form letter.

✓ Don't threaten the legislator with defeat at the next election.

✓ Don't become a chronic letter writer.

✓ Don't send carbon copies.

Sources: CTN State Civics Toolbox: <http://www.ctn.state.ct.us/civics/pdf/Do's%20and%20Don'ts.pdf>

FAQS ON WRITING TO ELECTED OFFICIALS

Is it better to write an old fashioned letter or send an email?

That is totally up to you! Some people feel that hard copy, “snail mail” gets noticed. But emails can be quick and effective, especially when issues and decisions are moving fast. If you do send a hard copy letter, make sure to personalize it. Form letters and postcards are typically ignored (from a content perspective), and because mail sent to Capitol Hill needs to be screened and radiated, your snail mail could take up to four weeks to reach your Member of Congress. On a local level, however, hard copy mail may be more effective.

How effective are emails/letters to the President?

That depends on the President! Tens of thousands of letters, e-mail messages and faxes arrive at the White House every day. For the Obama presidency, from these thousands of letters, ten were painstakingly selected to be placed in President Obama's briefing book each weeknight. Designed to give the president a sampling menu of what Americans are thinking, these ten are the ones Mr. Obama read, and sometimes answered by hand. For President Trump, who knows? But given what we've seen so far, you may get more response from a tweet!

Can I call multiple times or send multiple emails?

Most staffers are too busy to review their pro/con tally lists for duplicates, so generally speaking, your voice could count twice if you double down on your efforts.

What about sending emails/letters to elected officials who don't represent me?

Most legislators will pay more attention to communications from constituents in their districts or state. The legislators staffers in the office do create pro/con tallies to provide to their Member of Congress on issues.

Should I expect a response to my letter?

You may or may not receive a response. It all depends on the person you are writing to, the issue you discuss, how many people wrote in about that issue, how busy the office is with other mail, how busy the official is at the moment, and many other varied factors. You may get a form letter response which outlines their position on the subject you addressed in your correspondence.

Should I communicate with the district office or D.C. office for my Members of Congress?

Either one is fine, but some seasoned advocates suggest communicating with the D.C. office as a more effective approach, and in fact, some district offices simply forward your communications directly to the D.C. office anyway.

Sources: NY Times; The Art of Manliness, <http://www.artofmanliness.com/2011/06/17/how-to-write-your-congressman/>

HOW TO WRITE EFFECTIVE LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WHAT YOU *SHOULD* DO:

- ✓ Be timely, respond directly to breaking news or article/commentary published in the previous two days (for dailies) or previous issue of a weekly.
- ✓ Focus on **one** important point.
- ✓ Maximize your chance of being published by removing every non-essential word. E.g., don't say, "I think..." It's obvious. This also minimizes the chance of editors changing the letter.
- ✓ Use verified facts. Check original sources rather than repeating "fact" cited in another media outlet.
- ✓ Create immediacy by indicating how readers will be affected by the issue you address; try to balance criticism with a positive — ask readers for action when practical. This includes your elected representatives — by including their names in the letter.
- ✓ Point people to a source for more information or to engage in action whenever practical.
- ✓ E-mail your letter in the body of the email (never send unsolicited attachments) and put "Letter re: your topic or article name" in the subject line. If you wish to copy others or submit to more than one publication, do so in a separate email. Include your address and phone number for verification.
- ✓ If the publication publishes an online version, hyperlink the relevant websites or emails.
- ✓ Speak in the language and to the literacy level of that publication's readers.

WHAT YOU *SHOULD NOT* DO:

- ✓ Don't ignore the format and guidelines used in the target publication, including word count (250 words is typical, but some can be 100)
- ✓ Don't overstate/exaggerate your points. One overstatement makes every following point suspect.
- ✓ Don't insult your opponents.
- ✓ Avoid jargon or acronyms (spell out any name the first time you use it, followed by the acronym in parentheses).
- ✓ Never use all capital letters or bold text to emphasize a word. It will rarely be printed that way and may prevent your from being considered. You may italicize one or two words, but most papers will print it in plain text regardless. Use quotation marks to indicate title of a book, article, etc.
- ✓ Many magazines tend to be read by like-minded people, rather than the broader cross-sections of society who read most newspapers. Consider the typical reader of the publication, and keep her in mind when writing.
- ✓ Don't get discouraged. consider your effort a failure if your letter isn't used in larger publications (where even the best letters face long odds). Each letter is read and plays some role in molding the thinking and content selection of the editors.



RESOURCES

RESOURCES

votesmart.org

Project Vote Smart provides unbiased information for electoral decision-making. Profile information for federal elected officials and candidates is available. Site allows you to look up the voting history of your Member of Congress.

lwv.org

The League of Women Voters is a non-partisan political organization that encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government.

[Dosomething.org](https://dosomething.org)

Organization for young people who want to get active in a cause. Site allows you to filter to issues you care about and learn about actions you can take, based on the time you'd like to invest and type of activity you'd like to get involved in.

rockthevote.com

Voting info, voting tools, register to vote, or check to validate you are registered, information for students on voting.

[Occupy.com](https://occupy.com)

Fantastic guide for political activism: Indivisible: a Practical Guide for Resisting the Trump Agenda

[Thunderclap.it](https://thunderclap.it)

The world's first crowdspeaking platform. When audience shares the same message at the same time, their friends and followers are more likely to take notice, so your reach extends beyond your existing network, growing your audience and exposing your message to a broader community.

[Wall-of-us.org](https://wall-of-us.org)

Sign up and receive four acts of resistance in your inbox each week. Mission of the group is to make it simply irresistible to resist Trump.

[Opensecrets.com](https://opensecrets.com)

Comprehensive site that allows you to research campaign contributors for Members of Congress.

[Dailykos.com](https://dailykos.com)

Daily Kos is a progressive news organization, community, and activist hub.

[Newtownctdemocrats.org](https://newtownctdemocrats.org)

Newtown Democratic Town Committee website.

ctdems.org

Site for the Connecticut Democratic party. Sign up for newsletter:
<http://ctdems.bluestatedigital.com/page/s/>

<http://www.Democrats.org>

National Democratic Party website. The site has easy ways to gather research and advocate on key issues with a click of a mouse.

RESOURCES, CONTINUED

runforsomething.net

A new group dedicated to recruiting millennials to run for office, providing information, resources and connecting people to training organizations.

5calls.org

Gives you contacts and scripts so calling is quick and easy. They use your location to give you local representatives so your calls are more impactful.

thesixtyfive.org

This group creates Weekly Call to Actions, maintains a bank of call scripts on high-priority issues.

whitehouseinc.org

When you submit your phone number on the site, you'll receive a call and be randomly connected to one of Trump's properties, where you can leave a message for President Trump.

[News and Guts Facebook page](#)

Created by Dan Rather and dedicated to insightful coverage and conversation.

Countable.us

An app that makes it easy to pester your congress member. Gives you an overview of the bills your national reps are debating and lets you instantly send emails to those reps telling them how you would like for them to vote.

Swingleft.org

Helps you find and commit to supporting progressives in your closest Swing District so you can help ensure Democrats take back the House in 2018.

Theunitedstatesofwomen.org

An organization dedicated to being the megaphone for gender equality, bringing young women into the feminist movement and pushing a comprehensive women's agenda.

Brandnewcongress.org

Started by Bernie Sanders staffers, this is a campaign to run 400+ non-politician candidates for Congress in 2018 in one unified campaign behind one plan to rebuild the economy, repair our communities and reform our institutions.

Itstimenetwork.org

Inclusive community of people and organizations working collaboratively to accelerate the full empowerment of women and girls in order to achieve gender equity, evolve democracy and build fair economies that regenerate the Earth.

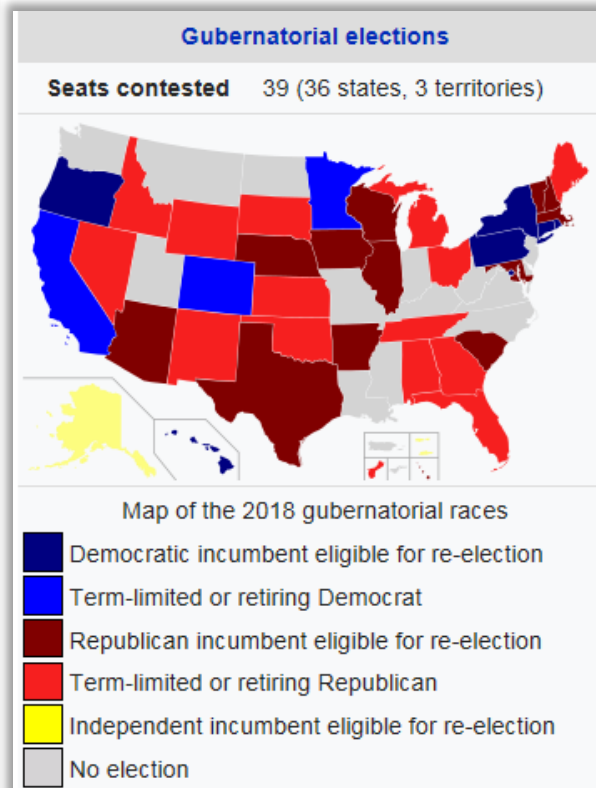
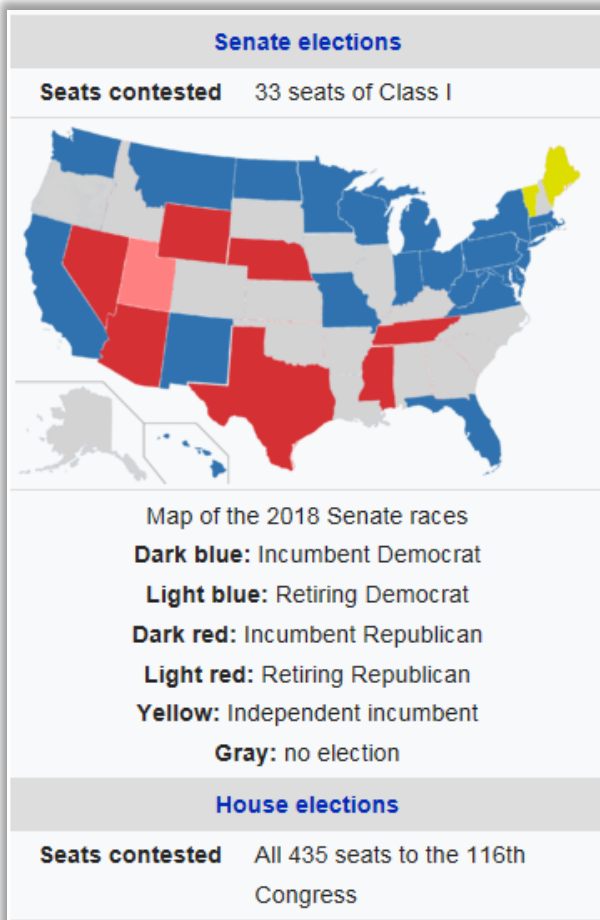
Womensmarch.com and womensmarch.com/100


Women's March site and link to the 10 actions for the first 100 Days.

UNITED STATES ELECTIONS, 2018

The 2018 United States elections will mostly be held on Tuesday, November 6, 2018. These midterm elections will take place in the middle of Republican President Donald Trump's term.

All 435 seats in the United States House of Representatives and 33 of the 100 seats in the United States Senate will be contested. 39 state and territorial governorships and numerous other state and local elections will also be contested.



 [Swingleft.org](https://www.swingleft.org)
Helps you find and commit to supporting progressives in your closest Swing District so you can help ensure Democrats take back the House in 2018.

Source: https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_elections,_2018

VOTING BASICS IN CONNECTICUT

REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS:

- You must have a current driver's license, learner's permit, or non-driver photo ID card issued by the CT Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) and a signature on file with the DMV.
- You must be at least 17 and turning 18 before Election Day.
- You must be a U.S. citizen living in Connecticut.
- **If you are a college student** living away from home, you may choose to complete an absentee ballot for the election in your home town or register to vote in your college town.
- **If you move** you must re-register to vote in your new town of residence. If you moved to Connecticut from another state, if you moved to a different town within Connecticut, or even if you moved within the same town, your polling location may have changed. You must update your voter registration to reflect your new address.

WHEN APPLICATIONS MAY BE MADE:

Beginning on the **31st** day before an election and beginning on the **21st** day before a primary

REGISTRATION CUT-OFF:

- **Primary:** Application must be postmarked by the 5th day before a primary (OR received by your Registrar of Voters or a voter registration agency by the 5th day before a primary). You may apply in person to your town clerk or registrar until 12:00 noon on the last business day before a primary.
- **Election:** Your application must be postmarked or received by a voter registration agency by the 7th day before an election (OR you may register in person with your Registrar of Voters by the 7th day before an election).

3 MONTHS BEFORE PRIMARY:

Last day that enrolled elector can transfer from one party to another or, if unaffiliated electors are permitted to vote in a party primary, to erase from a party, and be eligible to vote in municipal primary of a new party.

ABSENTEE BALLOTS:

- Must be returned by mail so that it is received by the municipal clerk not later than the close of the polls on the day of election; or returned by the elector in person to said clerk by the day before an election or primary.
- A presidential ballot or overseas ballot must be mailed or otherwise returned by the elector or applicant so that it is received by the town clerk not later than the close of the polls on election day.



Did you know?

You can register to vote online at [Voterregistration.ct.gov](http://www.voterregistration.ct.gov)

Thanks to Connecticut's **Election Day Registration** law, you can register and vote in person on Election Day at your town's Election Day Registration location. To register in person, you will need to supply proof of identity and residence. You can find out more about Election Day Registration and EDR locations at:

<http://www.sots.ct.gov/sots/cwp/view.asp?a=3179&q=534366>
