

Citizen Participation in the Government – Indiana Standard 14 and 17

Citizens can participate in the election process at the national, state, and local levels in several ways, exercising their democratic rights and helping shape their communities and government. Here are the main ways citizens can get involved:

1. **Voting:**

- **National Level:** Citizens can vote in national elections, such as presidential elections, congressional races, and referendums.
- **State Level:** State-level elections include the election of governors, state legislators, and state ballot initiatives.
- **Local Level:** Local elections involve voting for mayors, city council members, school board officials, and other local positions, as well as local ballot measures.

2. **Registering to Vote:** Before voting, citizens must register to vote, ensuring they are eligible and properly documented to participate in elections. Registration procedures vary by state.

3. **Campaigning and Donating:** Citizens can actively support political candidates or issues they believe in by volunteering for campaigns, making financial contributions, or hosting fundraisers.

4. **Educating Themselves:** Staying informed about candidates, issues, and political platforms is essential. Citizens can attend candidate debates, read news sources, and research their options.

5. **Running for Office:** Citizens who meet eligibility requirements can run for political office at various levels, including local, state, and national positions.

6. **Participating in Primaries and Caucuses:** In some states, citizens can participate in primary elections or caucuses to help choose their political party's candidates for various offices.

7. **Serving as Poll Workers:** Citizens can volunteer as poll workers to help facilitate the voting process on election day, ensuring smooth and fair elections.

8. **Joining Civic Organizations:** Civic organizations, like the League of Women Voters or local community groups, provide opportunities for citizens to get involved in voter education, registration drives, and advocacy efforts.

9. **Contacting Elected Officials:** Citizens can contact their elected officials at all levels of government to express their opinions, concerns, and suggestions on various issues.

10. **Participating in Grassroots Movements:** Citizens can engage in grassroots movements to raise awareness about specific causes or issues and influence political decision-makers.

11. **Serving on Boards and Commissions:** Many local governments have advisory boards and commissions that citizens can join to provide input on policies and decisions.

12. **Attending Town Hall Meetings:** Citizens can attend town hall meetings hosted by elected officials to discuss local and national issues and voice their concerns.

13. **Petitioning and Advocacy:** Citizens can create and sign petitions or engage in advocacy efforts to influence policy changes or raise awareness about important issues.

14. **Engaging in Public Discourse:** Citizens can participate in public discussions, debates, and forums to share their viewpoints and engage with others in their community or online.

15. **Encouraging Voter Turnout:** Encouraging friends, family, and community members to participate in elections is a valuable way to increase voter turnout and civic engagement.

By participating in these ways, citizens play an active role in shaping their government and communities, ensuring that their voices are heard in the democratic process at the national, state, and local levels.

Citizen Participation Assignment

Go to: [IGA | Find Your Legislator](#) to find your representatives.

POSITION	NAME	ADDRESS
State Senator		
State Representative		
Congress House of Representative		
Congress Senator – Senior		
Congress Senator – Junior		

Civic Assignment Options (Pick one)

- **Educating Yourself:** Research a current political issue and write a one-page summary of the issue to include possible solutions to the issue.
- **Contacting Elected Officials:** Contact an elected official at any government level to express your opinion, concerns, and suggestions on a specific issue.
- **Attend Government Meeting:** Citizens can attend town hall meetings hosted by elected officials to discuss local and national issues and voice their concerns.

Civic Assignment Options Explained

Educating Yourself: Use the *Political Issue Research Form* to dig into a political issue. Below are some suggestions to make your research worthwhile.

- Pick a current political issue. You want the political issue to have views from multiple sides.
- Research both sides of the issue. It is important that your research contain multiple views. It might be easier to color code the research to make it clear that information exists from both sides.
- Make sure that you explain the reason for which side you take on the political issue.

Contacting Elected Officials: Complete the **Research Form** before sending the Letter or Email. Here are some important tips to keep in mind when drafting your letter:

- Include your name and personal contact information.
- Address the letter or email to a specific legislator. Make sure to verify the correct spelling of the legislator's name and use their correct title.
- The subject line should state your brief position on the legislative issue or proposed bill. For example, “Oppose Bill XYZ,” or “Support Bill XYZ.”
- Keep it brief and concise. Aim for no longer than one page.
- Identify that you are the legislator’s constituent if applicable.
- Identify the issue.
- If the issue is a particular bill, verify the full name and bill number and provide a short description of the bill.
- Communicate your issue and share the impact that it has on you personally.
- Support your argument concisely and make your strongest arguments in the beginning of the letter or email.
- Sign the letter personally.
- Mail the letter or send the email within a reasonable time frame so there is time for the legislator to read and to follow up with you.

John Doe
12345 Main Street
Your Town, Indiana 46204

[Date]

The Honorable [First Name] [Last Name]
Indiana State Senate
200 West Washington Street
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Dear Senator [Last Name]

Subject: Support for [title of the issue you want your representative to address]

Paragraph 1: I am writing to urge you to support [Bill Number if assigned, or the issue you want your representative to support]. Be clear and simple.

Paragraph 2: Briefly explain why you support or oppose the bill or why you are passionate about the issue you are raising. Use facts to strengthen your argument. Personal connections and experiences with the issue strengthen your argument.

Paragraph 3: Close your argument by restating your support. Thank your representative for reading the letter and considering your argument.

Sincerely,

[signature]

Name

Note: A well-organized letter that is free of misspellings and typographical errors.

Attend Government Meeting: Attend a city/town or school board meeting. Use the Government Meeting Form to document the meeting.

- Most government meetings publish on-line an agenda for the meeting. It will help you stay organized if you know the order in advance.
- Make sure to record details presented during the meeting.