

AMBASSADOR PUBLIC POLICY BADGE

Badge Purpose: When you’ve earned this badge, you’ll know about public policies and how you can influence legislation that matters to you.

| Activity | Materials Needed |
|---|---|
| Makers of Tomorrow <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discover the work and efforts of other women activists working to change their world. | <input type="checkbox"/> Phone or computer with internet access <input type="checkbox"/> Pen and paper |
| Think Globally <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look into the international movement of women’s suffrage. | <input type="checkbox"/> Phone or computer with internet access <input type="checkbox"/> Pen and paper |
| We Are the People <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research issues impacting your local community—and see if these issues are being talked about on the national level. | <input type="checkbox"/> Phone or computer with internet access <input type="checkbox"/> Pen and paper |
| Act Locally <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organize a letter-writing campaign. | <input type="checkbox"/> Phone or computer with internet access <input type="checkbox"/> Pen and paper <input type="checkbox"/> (Optional) “How to Effectively Talk to Your Member of Congress” sheet |

Activity #1: Makers of Tomorrow

Badge Connection: Step 1 – Find out how activists advocate for change

Materials Needed: Phone or computer with internet access; pen and paper

- If you’re not already familiar with the process, take a quick crash course in public policy—what it is, who creates it, and how it’s made: bit.ly/makingpublicpolicy
- Then, look into some women activists who’ve worked to enact change through public policy. There’s no shortage of leaders who’ve fought to make their voices heard (including yours!). If you already have a person in mind whose life you’d like to dig deeper into, go ahead! If you need some ideas, use this list as a jumping off point:
 - Reverend Addie Wyatt
 - Martha Griffiths
 - Dolores Huerta
 - Malala Yousafzai
 - Marian Wright Edelman
 - Linda Sarsour
 - Patrisse Cullors
 - Janet Mock



3. What issue(s) did your activist advocate for? How did they advocate for change—was it through public outreach (petitions, rallies, canvassing)? Lobbying Congress? Were they successful in their campaigns? How would you measure their success?
4. As you work through these activities, take note of any issues that “speak” to you—you’ll have a chance to advocate on behalf of this issue in a later activity.

Activity #2: Think Globally

Badge Connection: Step 2 – Engage as a global citizen

Materials Needed: Phone or computer with internet access; pen and paper

1. Look at other countries through the lens of women’s suffrage. American women couldn’t vote until 1920—and it took a group of dedicated activists fighting for almost an entire century before they won that right. Which country was the first to grant women the right to vote? Which country was the last to grant this right? Which countries still don’t allow women to vote?
 - bit.ly/worldwomensuffrage
 - wikigender.org/wiki/womens-suffrage
2. Then, do some research on what it took for women in those countries to win the right to vote. How did the movement begin? Who were its leaders? What steps did they take to make their voices heard?
3. Use these as points of reference for your own personal advocacy journey!

Activity #3: We Are the People

Badge Connection: Step 3 – Dig into national or state public policy and Step 4 – Explore local or community policy

Materials Needed: Phone or computer with internet access; pen and paper

1. Throughout history, it’s often the work of the community that creates change on the national level. This form of activism is called grassroots movement. These movements start small, but ignite regional, and then national attention. Think about the fight for women’s suffrage, Civil Rights, and marriage equality. Policies enacting these rights didn’t start from “top-down” government—they started with the people and shifted the conversation in government and policies.
2. What issues are coming up at the local level? If it’s an election year, take a look at the candidates’ platforms. What are they debating—is it healthcare, gun safety, minimum wage? If it’s not an election year, attend a neighborhood town hall or city council meeting and listen to the voices of your community. What are people concerned about? Is there a common threat to these stories (for example, safety, rising cost-of-living)?
3. Then, find out if these issues are being discussed on the national level. Are there bills currently being introduced in Congress that address these issues?
 - docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2017
 - leg.state.mn.us/leg/legis
 - govtrack.us/congress/bills

Activity #4: Act Locally

Badge Connection: Step 1 – Find out how activists advocate for change and Step 5 – See public policy in action

Materials Needed: Phone or computer with internet access; pen and paper; (optional) “How to Effectively Talk to Your Member of Congress” sheet

1. As you worked through the previous activities, was there an issue that jumped out at you—that really spoke to you? Find out if there’s a local organization or community that’s fighting for change about this specific issue.



Ask if you can volunteer at their office, or shadow a volunteer or employee at that organization to get a feel for a “day-in-the-life” of an activist.

2. Take note of the tools they use to enact change (from the tangible, like pounding the pavement to get signatures for their petition, to the intangible, like the power of persuasion when they face an opponent to their cause).
3. Then, bring these back to your troop, friends, and/or family to advocate for change at *your* local level.
4. One easy (but effective!) way to create change is through a letter-writing campaign. Letters from the public are one way that elected officials gauge public opinion (is this a bill that public supports? Doesn't support?). Your letter might not be personally read by your representative, but it will be read and tallied by one of their assistants or aides.

“You can drop a dozen binders full of white papers on my desk, and the stack won't be as effective as a single human willing to speak honestly about her life...Don't wait to tell your story. Sometimes in life it's better to let your emotions settle. But when you want to tell a story that moves people, urgency works in your favor. Raw is okay. Let your feelings show.” Kirsten Gillibrand, US Senator

5. Use the “How to Effectively Talk to Your Member of Congress” sheet for tips. Some guidelines for letter writing:
 - **Identify yourself and get to the point.** Your elected official works for you, but they're also very busy people. If you're clear and concise with your “ask,” they're more likely to pay attention. *“Dear [Representative/Senator/Elected Official], My name is [Juliette] and I'm a constituent in your district. I'm concerned about [issue] and am writing to ask you to [support/oppose] [legislation/bill].”*
 - **Prove it.** Use the next paragraph or two to argue your point. Why should your official support/oppose this legislation? Why does this issue matter?
 - **Make it personal.** Is this an issue that impacts you personally, or someone in your family? Remember Sen. Gillibrand's advice—a story has the power to move people to action.
 - **Thank them.** It's okay to be passionate about your cause, but remember to keep it civil. Thank your official for their time and attention.
6. *Alternative activity:* If you're comfortable with it, you can also organize a call-in and have your troop members, friends, and/or family call their elected officials.

More to Explore

Additional Resources:

- *Tools for Grassroots Activists* by Nora Gallagher and Lisa Myers
- howto.informationactivism.org



How to **effectively** talk to your member of Congress

Should I **send a letter** or make a **phone call**?

By **Emily Ellsworth** @editoremilye

**I worked for Congress for 6 years.
Here's what I learned about how they listen to constituents.**

First, tweeting or writing on Facebook is **largely ineffective**. I never looked at those comments except to remove the harassing ones.

Second, writing a letter to the **district office (state) is better than sending an email or writing a letter to DC**.

But, **the most effective thing is to actually call** them on the phone. At their district (state) office. They have to talk to you there.

We repped half a million people, it was impossible to read and respond personally to all letters. Impossible.

This was something in particular that I cared about as a staffer and worked very hard on, but the sheer volume of emails is overwhelming

So, we batched them with computer algorithms and sent out form letters based on topic and position. Regardless of method received.

But, phone calls! That was a thing that shook up our office from time. One time, a radio host gave out our district office phone # on air.

He was against our immigration policy and told our constituents to call. **And they did. All. Day. Long.** All I did all day was answer phones.

It was exhausting and **you can bet my bosses heard about it.** We had discussions because of that call to action.

If we started getting a pattern of calls, I called up our DC office and asked if they were getting the same calls and we talked.

Also, recognize that your letters and your emails get seen by **staffers**, just like your phone calls get answered. That's the way of it.

If you want to talk to your rep, show up at town hall meetings. Get a huge group that they can't ignore. Pack that place and ask questions.

We held town halls consistently that fewer than 50 people showed up for. And it was always the same people. So, shake it up.

As always, please **be kind but firm** with those staffers. They will listen and talk to you. I always, always did.

If you run an advocacy group, invite local staffers to show up to your events. Let them talk to people you work with and set up meetings.

I loved getting out of my office and meeting with advocates in immigration, healthcare, education, science, and every type of work.

Invite staffers on "field trips" and show them what it's like in your communities. Show them the work you are doing. It works.

Are you noticing a pattern here? **The staff are the ones who run the ground game for Congress.** Work on helping them understand and learn.

Because, if the staff knows you, when they have a question about a piece of legislation or amendment, they will be the one you call.

I've been called out a few times for my suggestions being ableist, and I'm listening to that feedback, but I have suggestions.

Sending a personal letter to your congressman's state office is **absolutely effective**. If you can't call on the phone, try to do that.

Also, if you can get involved in **local advocacy groups** that have people who can do the in-person meetings or phone calls, that's good too.

Another FAQ: how do I know if my representative is having a town hall meeting? **Sign up for their email list and you'll get notifications.**

And, that's the best I've got for you now. I hope it helps. Use your resources the best way you can and get their attention.

**IDENTIFY your Senate & House reps.
GET their phone and contact info**
District offices are usually on their web sites

→ WhoIsMyRepresentative.com

