



Twenty Ways for Youth Interested in Changing Policy Can Take Action Today

Do you feel like adults have all the power to create the policies that govern your life? You have more of a voice than you think and these 20 tips will help you make sure that those in charge hear you loud and clear.

Stay Informed about issues, policies, and community conversations.

1. Sign up for Google alerts to receive news and articles about policy issues that are relevant to your interests around your state.
2. Sign up for alerts and newsletters from your statehouse, and other organizations to stay up to date on policy.
3. Research what programs related to your issue area exist in your community; know what organizations run them and know who the leadership are at those organizations.
4. Educate yourself on the policy making process: Each local and state electoral body has its own process and timeline around policymaking and the budget. Each election also has important dates and processes related to voter registration and voting. Knowing the process and timeline will ensure that you spend your time efficiently and effectively, and never show up to the table after dinner is already over!

Build Relationships with key leaders and decision makers in the field.

5. Attend conferences, state capitol days, events, and meetings around your state and meet others who work in the field.
6. When you meet leaders who work in your area of interest, ask questions and research their organizations to learn about their policy agendas and priorities.
7. Introduce yourself, and keep in contact with leaders on a semi-annual basis by sending them an article or report you found, asking them to meet with you and talk about their role, volunteering for their organization, or attending an event put on by their organization.
8. Learn who the biggest supporters of your interest area are in the philanthropic, nonprofit, and business communities in your region.

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Join the Conversation by becoming a champion of your policy interest.

9. Follow elected officials and organizations related to your issue area on Facebook and Twitter, and participate in the conversations by commenting, liking, sharing, and retweeting information.
10. Join a coalition, or volunteer for a local or statewide advocacy organization.
11. During electoral season, attend a candidate forum and ask a question about candidates' platforms to support your issue area in their region, volunteer for phone banks or GOTV drives, and most importantly—take your support to the polls and cast your VOTE. Talk to your friends, family, and colleagues about important issues and encourage them to register to vote.
12. Work with your campus or statewide advocacy organization to write a Letter to the Editor for your local paper.
13. Write a letter to your local elected officials urging them to support a specific policy related to your issue area.
14. Meet with your local elected officials to talk to them about current policies that will impact topics/ issues of interest in your community.

Connect community engagement to policy change and action!

15. Develop initiatives that offer school credit for work within your related organizations. This credit work must be related to building or shaping policy priorities that seek to advance priorities for that particular entity or advocacy activity or learning opportunities.
16. Seek out, encourage or help to establish internship programs that allow youth to engage and support organizations, efforts, and/or related issues or campaigns. These internships should be focused on building or shaping public policy or advocacy activity or learning opportunities.
17. Encourage organizations to establish committees or subcommittees led by youth to help shape that organization's policy priorities and/or shape policy priorities of local, state, or federal government agencies—from a youth perspective.
18. Support policies that encourage institutions of higher education and school districts to support careers in in your interest area.
19. Support and/or educate political candidates about your policy priorities and reinforce that youth have a vested interest in policy too.
20. Lead by example: If you want a role at the table ask for one by taking your own action steps! For example:
 - a. Develop talking points and/or policy suggestions that are written from your perspective and that help to carve out a larger role for youth in an organization or effort related to your policy priorities.
 - b. Speak up in your way! If you believe your perspective will help diversify the conversation, share what you think and make sure your language is authentic to your peers, not the adults. Sometimes youth have the ability to cut through the jargon and keep things focused!
 - c. Demand a vote or seat at the decision making table. Policy impacts you and those who will work side by side with you in the future so make sure you are a part of shaping those policies.