



How to Advocate

Legislators appreciate hearing from their constituents on important issues. For education to become and stay a priority, state legislators must hear from education advocates across the state. Together, we can all make a difference by being informed and engaged in the legislative process.

- 1. Learn how schools are funded.** Exploring the [SAFF website](#) will provide a good base. Find out from your school district how your local schools are impacted. Be ready to share your personal stories of how decisions made by legislators affect your child's education.
- 2. Get to know your legislators.** Legislators try their best to represent their constituents. They need to hear from the people they represent. Developing a good working relationship with your legislators is the first step in working with them effectively in the future. [Who represents me?](#)
 - Schedule a meeting with your local legislators and invite other interested parents and community members.
 - Look for other opportunities, such as constituent meetings, that many legislators hold in their home districts.
 - Find out the best way to communicate with your legislator in the future. Use your time with your legislator to introduce yourself and discuss some of your concerns. Ask how you can be of help to them in addressing your concerns.
- 3. Educate and engage your community.** Talk with other parents, your neighbors, and friends about your shared interests. Share with them how important it is that they get involved. Help build a grassroots effort to make funding for public education a priority
- 4. Know when to contact your local legislators and other key officials.** Knowing the right time and the correct information can make all the difference in advocating for your children and their schools. [Subscribe to the SAFF legislative updates](#)³, published weekly during the legislative session.
 - Be prepared to contact your legislators and essential committee chairs, legislative leaders, and the Governor.
 - Bring together parents, senior citizens, and local business owners. Build a grassroots network in your community that can be activated to support our schools during critical times during the legislative sessions.
Consider hosting an event at which people can write letters to their legislators and key state leaders. Provide updated information, key points, and sample letters.
- 5. Know how to write effective emails to legislators.** Elected officials read their emails and note the issues that are of concern to their constituents. A logical, courteous email can impact a legislator's decision-making. Your communications let legislators know how you feel about a particular issue. It can change a legislator's mind, particularly when they are wavering on a topic. Emails can also let a legislator working on your behalf know that you support their efforts.

To be most effective, consider the following points when composing.

- Be as brief as possible.
- Address your email correctly (Dear Senator/Representative/Governor). Check the spelling of all names.
- State the reason why you are writing at the beginning of the letter. If you are writing about a specific piece of legislation, include the House or Senate bill number. If the legislator is the bill's author, thank them. Address only one issue per letter.
- State your position on the issue. Be clear about how you want your legislator to respond or vote.
- Identify yourself and your school district by name. Note if you are a constituent in their district.

- State your reasons for supporting or opposing the legislation. Use facts and personal experiences/situations to support your position. Use your letter to educate elected officials about the potential impact of their vote on local schools, students, families, and teachers.
 - Thank the legislator for considering your views. Always send a note of appreciation if your legislator supports your issue.
 - Always include your name and home address in the email.
6. **Join a SAFF Day at the Capitol.** The SAFF Office Manager Kim Springer hosts Capitol visits, bringing together community members in SAFF districts with their legislators.
7. **Visit the Capitol to meet with your local legislators.** Meet with your legislator to discuss specific issues or concerns.
- Call in advance to schedule a meeting. Meet them at the Capitol or arrange a location in your community.
 - If a legislator's schedule is full, you may be able to meet briefly between committee meetings. Ask if this is a possibility.
 - Prepare ahead of time so that you can provide accurate information and facts.
 - Share specific examples and personal stories of how proposed legislation will impact students in your community.
 - Be friendly and polite.
 - Listen respectfully to his or her responses.
 - Know the different viewpoints so that you can respond effectively.
 - Ask your legislator for their position on the issue.
 - Ask if they have any questions.
 - If you are unsure about something, it is okay to say you don't know but will find the answer.
 - Offer to follow up with the requested information.
 - Ask your legislator how you can work with them on the issue.
 - Follow up with a thank-you email.
8. **Attend committee meetings.** Write and present testimony. Bills are assigned to be heard and discussed in a committee. These meetings are open to the public, with seating available on a first-come basis. During these meetings, the bill's author will present the bill to the committee members. Staff may be asked to give additional testimony and answer questions from the committee members. Proponents and opponents of the bill are allowed to testify as time permits.