



ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

A guide to legislative activism

ACLU

INTRO.

Welcome, we're glad you're here!

Have you ever found yourself thinking, “Wow, that’s terrible. I should really do something,” after hearing about proposed legislation in Bismarck or seeing the latest headlines about local politics?

Well, you definitely can do something! We're here to help.

You can affect civil rights policy in North Dakota by learning the best ways to communicate and share your story with elected officials. Keep this toolkit handy throughout North Dakota’s legislative session as you engage in the legislative process. We’ve included resources for you to use as you participate or organize action yourself. Please email us at northdakota@aclu.org with any questions you might have. Together, we will ensure our lawmakers protect our freedoms and defend our constitutional rights.



Legislative Session

Let's talk about what happens at the capitol and how you can get involved.

#NDLeg or the North Dakota Legislature is comprised of two chambers which are the Senate and House of Representatives. Elections in districts are staggered. Half of the districts have elections every two years.

Members of both chambers, often referred to as legislators, are tasked with proposing bills that will create new laws and opportunities for North Dakotans.

- The Senate has 47 members
- The House has 94 members

Each bill that is proposed to become law must be approved by both chambers. North Dakota currently has a part-time citizen legislature with members from various backgrounds and communities. All 141 members serve year-round representing constituents in their districts to help them solve problems, and studying new ideas.

Members of each chamber are also divided into several committees that serve to address specific community needs. To find out which committee(s) your legislators are on, visit legis.nd.gov.

CORE RESPONSIBILITIES OF LEGISLATORS

CHECKS & BALANCE: Legislators provide a sense of checks and balances between the executive, judicial, and legislative branches of government.

PROBLEM SOLVE AND CREATE OPPORTUNITY: Simply put, they create and vote on bills to govern North Dakota.

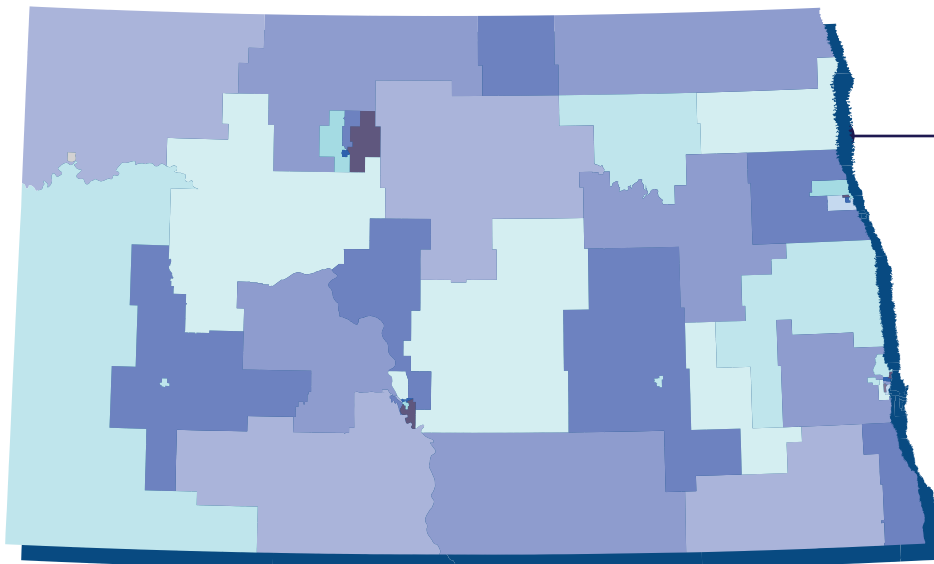
EQUAL AND FAIR REPRESENTATION: Legislators must have an ear to their constituents at all times. When they don't we need to rise up and hold them to account. If your legislators aren't representing you how you think they should be you can hold them accountable. In North Dakota, we have a citizen legislature so that means your representatives and senator are your neighbors.

You can find their information at legis.nd.gov or by using your smartphone to scan the QR code at the bottom of this page.




How does the legislature work?

It's important to know how your state legislature operates in order to hold your elected officials accountable in an effective manner. In the following pages we will go over how the state legislature operates, how bills become laws, and more.



47
LEGISLATIVE DISTRICTS

District boundaries change with the U.S. Census 

EACH STATE
LEGISLATOR MUST BE:

- ✓ a United States citizen,
- ✓ at least 18 years of age on or before the election date,
- ✓ a resident of North Dakota for one year prior to the election,
- ✓ and a qualified elector of the legislative district.

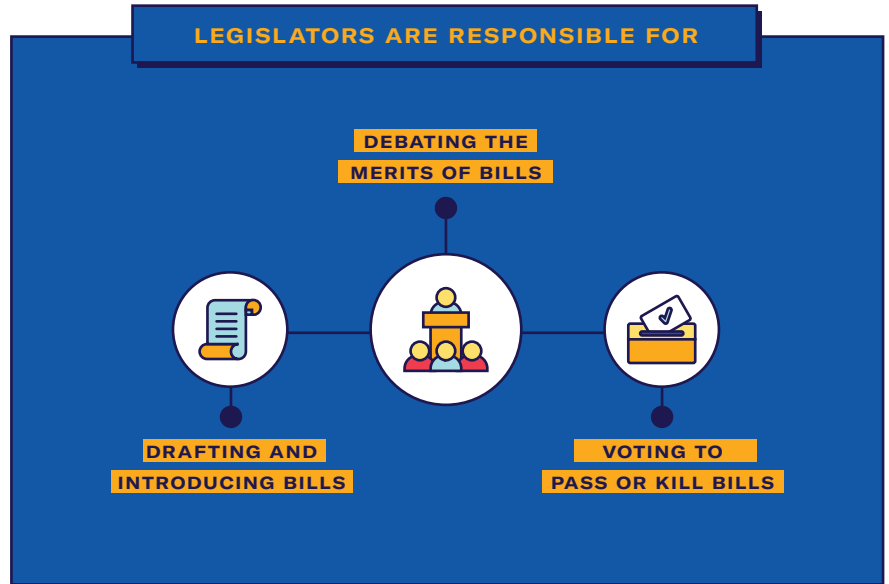


NORTH DAKOTA ELECTS **47** AND **94**
SENATORS REPRESENTATIVES

Let's talk about bills, elections, and what lawmakers do.

It might just be a bill and only a bill, but this drafted piece of legislation could become law and affect your life in various ways. On this page, we illustrate how a bill becomes law in North Dakota. For more information, visit legis.nd.gov.

For bills we are tracking, check out aclund.org/bills.



ELECTIONS IN DISTRICTS ARE STAGGERED. HALF THE DISTRICTS HAVE ELECTIONS EVERY 2 YEARS.

 ALL LEGISLATORS SERVE 4 YEAR TERMS





Legislative Advocacy

Let's talk about what you can do when your lawmakers are doing things you don't agree with.

Your elected officials are all in office for one reason: to represent you. They need and want to hear from you. Contact them and let them know where you stand on the issues!

With the exception of those in leadership roles, most elected officials in North Dakota have no staff or admin team. That mean your senator or representatives will be the ones answering when you contact them. The amount of response an elected official gets on a certain issue can help determine its importance in their eyes. For example if an elected official is getting a dozens of calls, emails, and letters saying "vote NO on XYZ," it will make a big impression. Conversely, if they're not hearing anything from their constituents, they'll assume no one cares or what they are doing is permissible.

Do you know who your legislators are? Or what their thoughts are on issues that matter to you? Find their contact information at **legis.nd.gov** or use your smartphone to scan the QR code below.



So, what can you do?



CONNECT WITH YOUR LEGISLATORS
EARLY AND OFTEN

You don't have to travel to Bismarck to stay in the loop when it comes to what's happening at the North Dakota Legislature. There are a multitude of tools at your disposal right now if you have access to the Internet or a telephone. On this page, we will go over a few tried and true tactics for legislative accountability.



ELECTED OFFICIALS

CONSTITUENTS



Keep this in mind. If legislators don't hear from you, they assume you approve of their actions.

Before you take the follow steps, make sure to research your legislator. Look up their voting history, contact information, and more so you can make your case and meet them where they're at. To find this information visit, legis.nd.gov or use the QR code.



WAYS TO CONTACT YOUR LEGISLATOR



CALL THEM OR WRITE THEM



TIP 1

Know your district and name of your legislator

TIP 2

Plan out what you will say

TIP 3

Remember to mention the bill number (if there is one) and why you are calling or writing

TIP 4

Make it short and sweet and get to your point quickly

TIP 5

Tell a personal story they can connect to

TIP 6

Problem, solution, action (ie. "Vote yes on HB xxxx!")



MEET THEM IN PERSON OR VIRTUALLY



STEP ONE
Schedule your meeting



STEP TWO
Be flexible and patient



STEP THREE
Prepare and educate yourself and establish a clear goal



STEP FOUR
Follow up and say thank you!

Now, take your advocacy a bit further.



WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

SPREAD THE WORD

Talk with friends and family on social media or in person. Don't be afraid to talk politics, it's important.



WRITE AN OP-ED



JOIN A CAUSE OR ORGANIZATION

ATTEND LEGISLATIVE HEARINGS OR MEETINGS IN PERSON OR VIRTUALLY



ATTEND A VIRTUAL OR IN PERSON MARCH OR PROTEST

MORE INFO

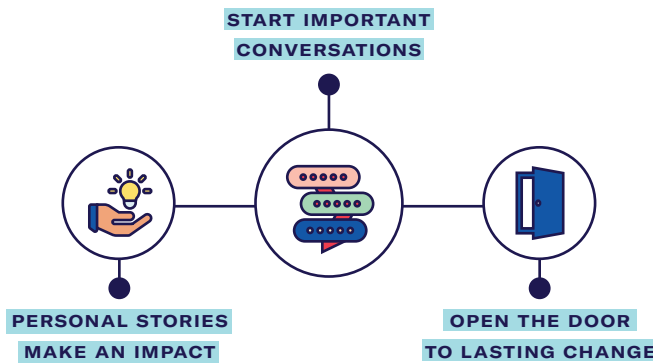
- Sign up to receive ACLU of North Dakota's e-mails for breaking news and legislative action alerts at aclund.org/alerts
- Learn about the legislation we're tracking at aclund.org/bills
- Look up your lawmakers at legis.nd.gov
- Volunteer to support our legislative priorities at aclund.org/alerts
- **Follow the ACLU of North Dakota on social media and tag us when you post about your advocacy efforts!**

If you're planning to share your story, here are some tips.

Writing a letter to the editor of your local newspaper can be an extremely effective way to influence public opinion and shape legislators' views. Letters to the editor reach a large audience, are often monitored by public officials, can bring up information not addressed in a news article, and can help create the impression of widespread support for or opposition to an issue. Plus, they're fun to read.

The "Letter to the Editor" section is often one of the most widely read sections of the newspaper! Keep your letter to the editor short – most papers usually have a 200 word limit – and share your opinion on a bill or issue. Then sign it and send it to one of the North Dakota newspapers listed here: aclund.org/editor.

WHY IS SHARING YOUR STORY IMPORTANT?



SAMPLE LETTER TO GET YOU STARTED

"Senate Bill (SB) 1234 undermines the ability of individuals and families to make personal and private medical decisions. They also dictate the relationship between health care providers and their patients, putting patients' health at risk.

It's important to respect reproductive autonomy and reserve personal decisions regarding health care and family planning to an individual and their chosen support team. Please do not allow politicians with little to no medical knowledge dictate how North Dakotans are supposed to access reproductive health care.

Don't allow far-reaching bills to go further. You can put private and personal health decisions back where they belong, in the hands of every North Dakotan, their family and their doctor. Please VOTE NO on SB 1234."

Thank you,



Here are even more ways to get in touch with legislators and make your voice heard during session.

FOLLOW ALONG AT HOME

You don't have to travel to Bismarck to stay in the loop when it comes to what's happening at the North Dakota Legislature. Find live and recorded audio of committee and floor hearings at legis.nd.gov. Follow **#NDLeg** on Twitter for breaking news and coverage, and keep up with what North Dakota legislators are posting by following our Twitter list at [aclund.org/ndleg-twitter](https://twitter.com/aclund.org/ndleg-twitter). Then follow up with your thoughts on where legislators stand on critical civil liberties issues.

PICK UP THE PHONE

Phone calls can be an extremely effective way for you to communicate your views on any given issue, especially if in-person meetings aren't for you.

If you don't get an answer right away, be sure to leave a message and note why you're calling, your name, and how they can best reach you. Take it a step further and tell them that you will follow up with another phone call in a week if you don't hear back.

North Dakota Legislative Session Phone Number:

- Main phone line during session: 701-328-2916

USE SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a great way to directly engage with your legislators who have pages as well as fellow activists. Use your platform to raise community awareness of an issue you care about in a visual way. Be sure to use relevant hashtags like **#NDLeg** when posting on Twitter and Instagram. If you see your friends posting content during session, be sure to retweet and like their commentary! It will help ensure your message gets across, too.

GET YOUR FRIENDS INVOLVED, TOO

Letter writing parties are a great way to provide information, motivate activists, and organize collective action. But getting social doesn't have to mean getting together in person. Plan a virtual gathering with friends and neighbors to talk about the issues while writing your legislators. Or simply share these resources and encourage them to take action, too.

ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE RIGHT NOW:

- Sign up for ACLU People Power at peoplepower.org
- Follow the ACLU on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook
- Share the sign up URL for this kit with your peers aclund.org/advo-kit or use the QR code below.



Postcard instructions and content ideas

With your toolkit, we've included three stamped postcards for you to send to your legislators. While the topic you choose to discuss is entirely up to you, we thought to include a couple ideas to help get you started. Keep in mind, that while passion and intent is important, cursing or using all caps might not get your message across in the best way.

Think to yourself, "How would I want to be approached about this issue?" or "Where does my legislator currently stand on this topic and how can I express my concerns in an approachable and informative way?"

If you're wondering who to send your message to, consider writing your representatives and your senator. Alternatively, you could write the governor, attorney general, or secretary of state depending on what issue you'd like to address. You can find your lawmakers address at legis.nd.gov.

If you get stuck, visit aclund.org or use your smartphone to scan the the QR code on this page. You can also email northdakota@aclu.org anytime.





THANK YOU

FOR SHOWING UP

CUZ
ONLY
VERY
FRAGILE
EGOS
FEAR
EQUALITY

PROTECT
TRANS
KIDS

VISIT [ACLUND.ORG](https://aclund.org) FOR MORE INFORMATION
OR EMAIL [NORTHDAKOTA@ACLU.ORG](mailto:northdakota@aclu.org).

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