



Advocacy 101

What is advocacy?

Advocacy is simply making your voice heard on issues that are important to you, and heard by the individuals who can influence the issue(s) you champion. Advocacy often helps us become more aware of our own rights, and to exercise those rights, to be involved in and influence decisions that are being made about our future. You can make a real difference by communicating with legislators through phone calls, emails, and in-person meetings, or through media and social media campaigns. To be an effective advocate, one must have some understanding of the political process and the ways you can influence it.

Kansas Political Process



To effectively participate in legislative advocacy requires some understanding of the Kansas legislative process and the points at which you as a citizen can make the most impact.

The Kansas Legislature consists of two chambers:

1. A [House of Representatives](#) with 125 members, all elected every even-numbered year and
2. A [Senate](#) with 40 members, elected for a four-year term

The Legislature convenes on the second Monday in January for an annual session and typically adjourns in early May. A bill may be introduced by either house and goes through several steps before becoming law:

- **Introduction** – To introduce a bill, a lawmaker asks legislative staff to translate an idea for a new law into specific legislative language. The resulting draft of changes to Kansas law is called a bill. To introduce a bill, a lawmaker need only hand a printout to a clerk on the chamber floor. A new bill is assigned a number (sequentially), with House bills using the prefix HB and Senate bills using SB.
- **Committee consideration** – Once introduced, a bill is assigned to a relevant committee where hearings and deliberation may take place. Any member of the public may sign up with the Committee assistant to testify during public committee hearings on a bill.
- **Floor vote** – Once a bill is approved by the Committee (as written or with amendments), it is sent back to its chamber of origin, where the entire chamber (using a procedural device called the “Committee of the Whole”) will deliberate, suggest and vote on amendments, and take a final vote for passage.
- **Second chamber** – If the bill passes the house of origin, it is sent to the second chamber where the process of hearings and votes is repeated. The second chamber can then pass the bill in the same form as the chamber of origin, or amend the bill and send it back to the chamber of origin for concurrence, which may or may not concur with changes.
- **Conference** – If both chambers can’t agree on one version of the bill, a joint conference committee is called and both chambers must vote to adopt the conference committee report.
- **Governor and veto consideration** – Once a bill passes both chambers, it is sent to the governor’s desk to be signed into law or vetoed. If a bill is vetoed, the legislature must override the veto with 2/3 votes in both houses. After a bill is signed by the governor or passed by 2/3 of both houses, it becomes law.

“Kansas law recognizes that the right of organized as well as unorganized interests to influence governmental policy is an integral part of the American and Kansas political process. Such efforts are based in large part on the constitutional guarantees of freedom of speech and association and the right to participate in one’s government.”
Kansas Ethics Commission



Governor Laura Kelly
2019 Inauguration

“We must keep our eyes fixed on the task at hand – and the job we were elected to do. The people who sent us here expect compromise and results.”

Tips for effective advocacy



Legislators want to hear from those they are elected to represent. It is your right to talk with your representatives about issues that impact you.

- **Be friendly.** Legislators are people. Talk to them as people; be friendly, sincere and honest. Don't let time run out before you turn the conversation to the issue you are there to champion.
- **Be prepared.** This is your opportunity to educate. Begin with a brief explanation of the topic. Provide good information, giving only facts.
- **Be respectful.** Opponents may believe that what you want to do is not good for Kansas, is too costly, or is unfavorable in other ways. Some legislators will disagree with your position. Treat them respectfully. They may be allies on other issues.
- **Be direct.** Answer all questions directly. Tell the whole story.
- **Ask for a specific action.** Find out if you have convinced a lawmaker on your position by asking him or her to take a specific action. KABC will suggest specific appropriate actions to take when we ask you to take an action on elder care priorities. Examples of actions lawmakers are accustomed to citizen advocates making include:
 - Inviting her/him to participate in a community meeting to learn more about an issue
 - Issuing a press statement or holding a public event to draw attention to an issue or a legislative response
 - Writing a letter to state agency officials to ensure the agency's effective oversight and implementation of a new/current law
 - Sponsoring a bill
 - Urging committee leadership to take action on a bill assigned to the committee
 - Speaking out on a bill during committee consideration, or asking for a vote on it by the committee
 - Speaking for or against a bill during floor debate, or taking a floor vote on the bill

- **Establish a relationship.** Distinguish yourself from others by calling or writing to your legislators. Let them know when they have done something right. Don't approach them only when you want something. Legislators respond best to people from their own districts. Build relationships first with lawmakers who represent your home. When you reach out to other lawmakers, try to go with someone from the legislator's district.
- **Say thanks.** Thank your legislator for meeting with you or for reading about your position on an issue.¹

How to find and contact your Kansas legislators

You can contact your legislators in many ways: by phone, email, in person, even through social media sites like Facebook and Twitter! What's the best way to make contact? When asked, 77% of legislators nationwide say they prefer to be contacted by email. However, the most effective method may be the method you are most comfortable with. Any contact your legislator receives from a constituent on an issue may help move the needle in your favor. Here are some tools to help you find and contact your legislators:



KS Leg Lookup:

A simple, user-friendly site that will tell you which state representative and senator represent you in the Kansas legislature and provide their official and personal contact information, including phone numbers, email addresses, and physical addresses. All you have to do is start typing your own address to find the information you need to stay involved in Kansas government.

<https://ksleglookup.org>

For a list of committees that typically hear bills related to KABC's mission and key committee members' contact information, click here: www.kabc.org/how-to-contact-key-legislative-committee-members

¹ Adapted from Children's Hospital of Wisconsin: Healthcare Advocacy 101

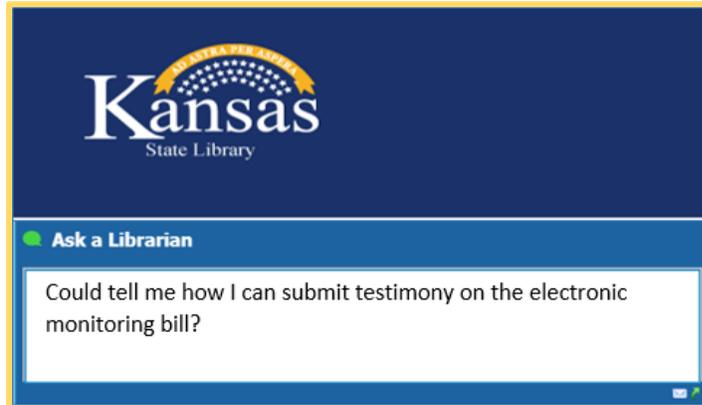
State and Federal Legislative Advocacy Resources

State of Kansas Library hotline ⇌

If you prefer to gather information by phone, you can **call or text** the State Library of Kansas to learn about your representatives, specific legislation, state government and legislative procedure, or request copies of bills, voting records and other information. You can also chat online by visiting their ["Ask A Librarian"](#) page.

Call toll-free: **800-432-3919**

Text/Call: **785-256-0733**



"I got involved with advocacy at the legislative level after my mother's abuse was caught on a camera we set up. I testified at house and senate hearings in support of a bill to guarantee a person's right to record their room in an adult care facility. Telling my mother's story helped pass this bill."

Lisa V, advocate:



⇌ Gov Track

To find your representatives in the United States Congress, click the following link to enter your address in this easy tool from **GovTrack**. This website can also help you track bills and votes, review the voting records of your representatives in Congress, and access other important congressional information. <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/members>

Remember, government is there to serve you. Don't be afraid to involve yourself on the issues that matter to you. Citizen participation can be a powerful driver of legislative action.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." -Margaret Mead