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**Episcopal Diocese of Newark**

Advocating for Effective Action:  
Making Your Voices Heard

Commission on Justice, Peace, and Racial Reconciliation

Civic engagement encompasses a wide range of actions taken by individuals or groups to address concerns and improve the well-being of their communities, social groups, or society as a whole.



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## **ECONOMIC, AND POLITICAL DIMENSIONS**

**THESE ARE OUR SPHERES OF INFLUENCE IN THE WAY WE LIVE**

**POLITICAL** - being involved in government-related activities

vs.

**PARTISAN** - promoting fidelity to a party or faction within American political life



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## **DEMOCRACY IS OUR PARTICIPATORY FORM OF GOVERNMENT**

*“The people are what matter to government, and a government should aim to give all the people under its jurisdiction the best possible life.”*

*Frances Perkins, Social Worker and U.S. Secretary of Labor 1933-45*



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*GOD'S POLITICS IS THE POLITICS OF COMPASSION*

*The Bible is a story about the Dream of God, the Beloved Community*

*... everyone is cared for absent of poverty, hunger and hate, and where all people are valued and treated with dignity and respect*



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*The Bible is a story of people engaging the powers of the day ...*

*Prophets of Old Testament Like Amos ...*

*Let Justice Roll Down Like Waters, and Righteousness Like an Ever-Flowing Stream*

*Jesus Challenging Dominant System*



## ADVOCACY

***“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.”*** Proverbs 31:8-9

Scripture emphasizes the importance of advocacy for the vulnerable, calling believers to speak up for the voiceless and defend the rights of the poor and oppressed ensuring their rights and needs are heard.

The Holy Spirit is also described as an advocate, guiding and empowering believers to live out their calling to advocate for justice and righteousness.

The concept of justice and fairness is central to biblical advocacy, urging people to uphold the rights of all, regardless of their status.

Advocacy involves the promoting the interests or causes of someone or a group of people. The main goal of advocacy is to *bring change* through public awareness or offering support.

An advocate is a person who argues for, recommends, or supports a cause of policy. Advocacy helps people to : Express their views, thoughts and concerns and to have access to information and guidance in a way that they can understand.

### **The 3C's of Advocacy**

1. Collaborate – Join an organized group at the federal, state or local level
2. Connect-Be solution-oriented
3. Communicate-YOUR VOICE MATTERS- remember you are a stakeholder, a voter. Contact your representatives and local leaders





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## Key Reasons People Advocate

- To protect rights
- To raise awareness
- To influence policy change
- To empower individuals
- To promote social justice
- Personal connection



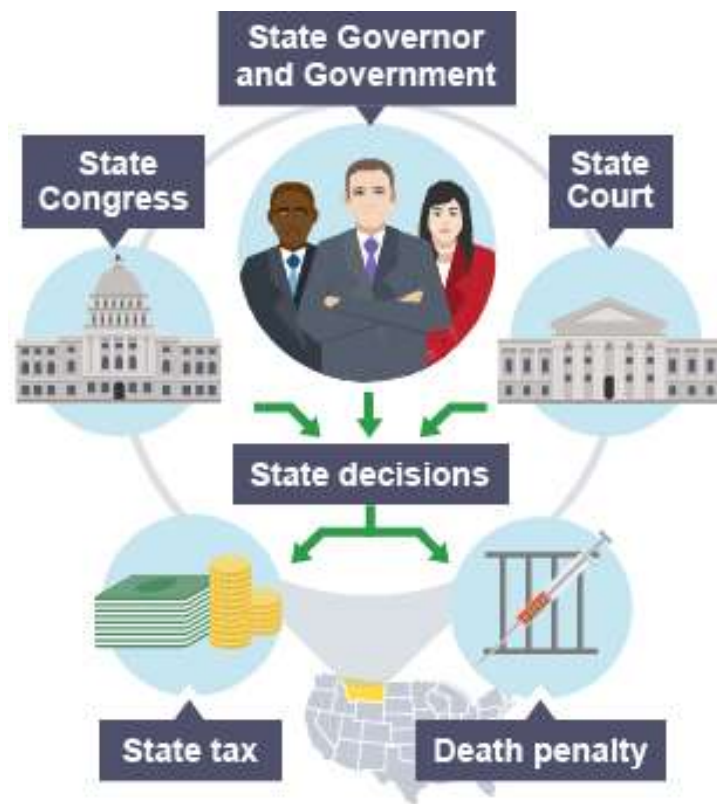
Our actions towards those in need reflect our relationship with and understanding of God.

Have you ever advocated? What have you advocated for?



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## HOW THE GOVERNMENT WORKS



## National and State Legislatures:

- **National:**

- Senate (2 Senators per state)
- House of Representatives (1 representative per district)

- **State:**

- Senate (1 senator per state district)
- Assembly (2 assemblypersons per state district)



## Identifying your representatives

### National:

<https://www.senate.gov/senators/senators-contact.htm>

[House.gov/representatives/find-your-representative](https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative)

Capitol switchboard:  
202-224-3121

### New Jersey:

<https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/legislative-roster>

*Legislative Roster*



Printable Roster

Party

House

District

Filter by Municipality

All

## How a bill becomes a law:

Introduced (with sponsors) to one of the chambers

Reviewed, assigned a number, and sent to committee (and/or subcommittee) for research/revision

## Identifying Committee members:

### **National:**

<https://www.congress.gov/committees>

### **New Jersey:**

<https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/committees/assembly-committees>

<https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/committees/senate-committees>

## How a bill becomes a law:

Voted on by full chamber

Sent to other chamber,  
which may accept or revise  
(or reject).



## How a bill becomes a law:

If revised, the bill is sent back to the originating chamber for approval

After bill is agreed on by both chambers, bill is sent to President or Governor

## How a bill becomes a law:

Executive may:

Sign (it becomes law)

Ignore (still becomes law)

Veto

If vetoed, the bill returns to legislature, which may override the veto.

## How a bill becomes a law:

If, at the end of the legislative session (2 years), the bill is not passed, it dies.



If the bill does pass and becomes a law, it is handed to agencies for for administration.

## Federal Budget

- Fiscal year, goes from Oct 1 to Sept 30
- Continuing Resolution using 2024 Funding Levels (mostly) until Sept.
- Congress Must Pass New Budget or Extend the Current Budget

## NJ Budget

- Governor proposes a state budget in late February for the following fiscal year, which goes from July 1 to June 30 or the following year.
- State budget must be balanced.
- State Legislature holds hearings and meets with stakeholders.
- State Legislature votes on proposed budget.

## Local Government

Local Government in New Jersey consists of counties and municipalities. There are 21 counties in New Jersey and each municipality is within one of these counties. Municipalities are cities, towns, boroughs, townships and villages.

For example, I live in Jersey City, which is in Hudson County in the Greenville section of town. Greenville is a municipality within Hudson County.

### Jersey City Local Government

- Office of the Mayor; City Council

City Council consists of nine members. One for each of the City's six wards, plus three at-large council members who represent the entire City.

Board of Education ( Elected)



## **Hudson County Board of County Commissioners**

The responsibilities of County Government include areas such as the Judicial System, Law Enforcement, Education, Environment, Open Space, Job Training, Economic Development, Housing and support of our individual communities.

The Hudson County Board of County Commissioners consists of a 9 members. Each member represents a District.

## **Office of the County Executive**

The Office of the County Executive is the administrative head of a county government, responsible for managing daily operations, implementing policies, and ensuring county services are provided efficiently and effectively.



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## **EFFECTIVE ACTIVITIES FOR CHANGE**

- **Voting:** Participating in local, state, and national elections.
- **Registering Voters:** Encouraging others to participate in the electoral process.
- **Participating in Political Discussions:** Engaging in debates and discussions about public policy.
- **Organizing:** Raising awareness about issues and advocating for change.
- **Signing Petitions:** Supporting or opposing specific policies or actions.
- **Contacting Elected Officials:** Communicating with representatives to voice opinions on issues.



## How to influence government officials?

***What is of greatest concern to them?***

Issues, *plus*:

**Getting re-elected = Raising \$\$ → Public relations**

They must demonstrate to their constituents and donors that:

- They understand
- They are responsive
- They are effective

Therefore...

to influence government officials:

1. Be clear about your concerns; make your case
2. Let them prove themselves - & then show your gratitude
3. Let them know the consequences of inaction

Remember: **Numbers matter**

## Options for communicating

- Sign a petition
- Write a letter
- Make a call
- Visit their office

And:

**Leverage the multiplier  
effect**

*Get your friends to do the same – and make it easy for them*

# How to make your voice heard?

## 1. Sign a petition

[Home](#)


### Tell the Assembly Environment Committee to Support S3398, EPR Plastic Reduction Bill!

We need your voice to urge the Assembly Environment, Natural Resources, and Solid Waste Committee to support the Packaging Product Stewardship Act, A5009 (Collazos-Gill)!

Recycling simply can't keep up with the production of single-use plastic packaging. That is why we need to focus on measures to reduce plastic production at its source, limit the use of single-use plastic, and embrace reusable packaging solutions.

*The Packaging Product Stewardship Act, A5009/S3398 asks manufacturers to pay and innovate to solve the enormous waste problems created by producing and selling their own products. This is a vital initiative because packaging forms a large category of waste material—28% in the United States, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.*

**478**  
SIGNATURES OF 526 GOAL



1 2

First Name

Last Name

Email

Zip

Phone

**Continue**

## 2. Write a letter – by mail or online

Go to the website of your elected official



### Share your thoughts with Andy

For general comments, use the form below.  
For assistance with a federal agency, please click [here](#).

## Contact Andy

Hearing from New Jerseyans like you is our first priority. Senator Kim's team is here to assist you, whether you want to share an opinion, meet with the Senator or his staff, get assistance with an issue with a federal government agency, or plan a trip to the Nation's Capital.

Share your thoughts with Andy

Help with a Federal Agency

Scheduling Requests

Prefix  \* First Name  \* Last Name

\* Address Line 1

\* City  \* State  \* Zip

Phone  \* Email

\* Topic


\* Subject

\* Message

Tailor your message

# How to make your voice heard?

Or, use a third-party platform, e.g., Office of Government Relations



Support the American Dream and Promise Act

On February 26, [the American Dream and Promise Act of 2025](#) was reintroduced in Congress with bipartisan support. This crucial legislation, championed by both Democrats and Republicans, aims to provide a pathway to citizenship for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients, Temporary Protected Status (TPS) holders, and Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) recipients who have long been integral members of our communities.

The Episcopal Church has consistently advocated for such

**Compose Your Message**

- Senator Cory Booker
- Senator Andy Kim
- Representative Mikie Sherrill

**Subject**

Please support the American Dream and Promi

**Message Body**

As an Episcopalian and your constituent, I urge you to support the American Dream and Promise Act. This crucial legislation provides a pathway to citizenship for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals.

**Review Your Profile** Not Valrie?

## How to make your voice heard?

### 3. Make a call

- Name & location – *I'm a constituent of Senator Kim's, from South Orange, zip code 07079*
- Issue/topic – *I am concerned about...the environment, our democracy, fairness in...*
- What you are asking for, *e.g.*,
  - The legislator's position on a bill → ask to vote for/against a bill, the budget
  - To "co-sponsor" a bill
  - To hold a Town Hall during the upcoming recess
  - Please make a statement about...
  - To speak out more publicly, more forcefully about...
- Why this is important to you: *you are a vet; you have a disabled child; you're a teacher*
- Thank the staff and the Representative (Senator, Assembly member...)



TELL  
STORIES!!

## 5. Visit their office

- **For a meeting:**
  - Must be arranged in advance – be flexible, accommodate their schedule
  - Best with a group, to get the appointment – *church, diocese...*
  - Prepare key points and roles – assume a 20-minute meeting:
    - Facilitator to manage the conversation
    - Others: introductions; what is the issue; how it impacts you; what is your ask; make your case; next steps
    - Ask what YOU can do to *support them* in taking the action you're requesting
  - Leave them information/materials – with name(s) & contact info
  - Follow up with a Thank You note – with any further info
- **If you can't get a meeting:** Consider a public visit / Hold a Town Hall / Protest

# How to make your voice heard?



“There is a mystique surrounding advocacy – that you have to be an expert on your issue, or an expert in the way the process works. Not so. ...

Advocacy is like anything else: beginners are not expected to know as much as professionals, and the more you do it the easier it gets.”

*-- Nancy Amidei, in “So You Want to Make a Difference: Advocacy is the Key!”*



## Practice Exercise

- Choose an issue you're concerned about
- What's the **next level** of influential action you can take?
- How will you make your case? (*see slide #30*)
- How can you multiply your impact – and get others to act?

*With your partner –*

- Share your strategy
- Request feedback
- Confirm your intended action plan





## **EFFECTIVE ACTIVITIES FOR CHANGE**

**Engaging in debates and discussions about public policy**

### **Town Halls**

Representative Thomas Kean (NJ-D7) Telephone Townhall **March 26<sup>th</sup> 6:30**

<https://kean.house.gov/townhall>

Representative Mikie Sherrill (NJ-D11) **April 3rd 5:00**

<https://www.facebook.com/RepMikieSherrill/>

Candidate Forums

Individual



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## OTHER DIRECT ACTIONS

- **Participating in Protests – Sit-Ins, Vigils, Marches, Peaceful Civil Disobedience**

<https://indivisible.org/>

<https://www.mobilize.us/>

<https://www.njcitizenaction.org/>





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## OTHER DIRECT ACTIONS

### **April 5: The big picture**

#### **Coalition of organizations nationwide**

*Check out the Partners list on the website to see them all*

#### **Major mobilization in Washington, D.C.**

*Join us there if you can!*

#### **Rallies, marches, and protests in metro areas**

*Check the map and join one near you!*

#### **Smaller demonstrations in towns nationwide**

*Plan one where you live - that's what today is all about!*

#### **The numbers are only growing**

*There are already over 300 registered events across 49 states, with 44515 RSVPs so far!*

<https://handsoff2025.com/about-1>

## **Using Your Economic Power**

Boycotts, Divesting, Consumer activism, Moral purchasing

Boycott is an act of nonviolent, voluntary abstention from a product, person, organization, or country as an expression of protest. It is usually for moral, social, political, or environmental reasons.

Mongomery Bus Boycott, Anti-Apartheid South Africa, Grape Strike 1965

Advocacy groups are promoting boycotts of major corporations to encourage support for diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives

Amazon and Target, Walmart backlash for their perceived retreat from DEI initiatives

## News and Information:

Official options for getting legislative news and information:

- National: Search <https://www.congress.gov/browse> for current bills.
- State: Search <https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/bill-search>
- Local: Search for the county or municipality's website, using *name of county or municipality site:.gov OR site:.org* (ex: morris county nj site:.gov, morristown nj site:.org)

## News and Information:

Other sources:

- Local news sources like [Patch](#), or search *town nj news*.
- Contact local libraries, especially those of counties or large municipalities.
- [Americans of Conscience](#)
- Relevant organizations: search for the issue and *site:.org* (ex: *immigration rights nj site:.org*). For recommendations of national organizations, check out Berkeley's list of [NGOs](#)
- [League of Women Voters](#)



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## Episcopal Office of Government Relations

[Episcopal Office of Government Relations](#)

[Episcopal Church Immigration Updates Tuesdays 1-1:30pm Eastern](#)—and join us with Episcopal Migration Ministries and other colleagues for this regular update on immigration action

Thursdays afternoon calls with EPPN: Thursdays 1-1:30 Weekly calls with office of government relations regarding policies and legislation

<https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJwkcemtrz0jHNMX0okGlkW1lTiNDUIysNLQ#/registration>







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***Gracious God,***

*Your image is alive in every human person*

*Create in us a desire to share and enjoy the fruits of your creation, restore in us your vision of a world made whole, and inspire us to commit ourselves to the common good. Give us, Oh Lord, ears to hear, eyes to see and hearts to love, so that we reflect you in our way of life, and in our choices, words and actions.*

**Amen**