

Tips to Engage with Policymakers



Make Your Voice Heard

CONNECT THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

Almost all policymakers use social media to interact with their constituents.

- Follow your policymakers on social media platforms to see what they are sharing, comment on their posts, and reshare if you agree – they may notice!
- Tag your policymakers in posts about science policy issues you care about to get their attention.

SIGN ONLINE LETTERS AND PETITIONS

Emails to policymakers are a fast and effective way to engage.

- Use AGU's online Policy Action Center at ActionCenter.agu.org, or one of the other online portals that helps you write a letter in minutes.
- Add personal examples and stories - these resonate best with legislators. If a letter has pre-populated text, add some personal language.
- Sign an online petition to quickly engage. Petitions don't hold as much weight for policymakers as individual letters or calls, but if enough people sign a petition it can make an impact.

CALL AN OFFICE

Phone calls are a quick but effective way to engage with policymakers—they assume you really care about an issue if you are willing to pick up the phone.

- Have a clear idea of what you want to say beforehand so you can make your points briefly and persuasively.
 - We recommend writing them down first.
- Briefly introduce yourself and state if you are a constituent to the policymaker.
- State your ask—what do you want the policymaker to do, specifically?
- Share 1-2 brief compelling reasons that taking the requested action will help the policymaker achieve their goals.
 - Research what they care about first.
- Get prepared with AGU's Crafting your Message and Ask worksheet!

MEET VIRTUALLY WITH POLICYMAKERS

Policymakers want to hear from constituents, and they and their staff will meet by phone or video.

- **Check out our overview** of setting up a meeting, preparing your message and ask, and how to follow up effectively.
- Invite a colleague to join you—it helps to show support for the issue and can help alleviate any nervousness you might have.
- Meet with policymakers at virtual telephone or video town halls – many elected officials are hosting these now and you can invite as many people as you want! Check policymakers' websites or social media or sign up to receive their newsletters to find out about the townhalls.



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Work in Science Policy

SIGN UP FOR LONG-TERM OPPORTUNITIES

If you are ready for a deeper commitment, there are policy opportunities that last for months or longer, including career options.

- Apply for year-long science policy fellowships, which are available across the U.S. and many of which are now virtual. **The AGU Congressional Science Fellowship** offers scientists the chance to work for a member of Congress or congressional committee for a year. Other fellowships offer other types of science policy jobs, such as with federal agencies, or with societies themselves.
- Consider a **science policy internship** with AGU or another organization, which is an excellent way to explore science policy for a few months and can often lead to a career.
- Be part of a long-term engagement program designed to help support and empower you to do more outreach while continuing your current full-time job or research. **AGU Voices for Science** is a year-long outreach program with training, support, and community built in.



RUN FOR OFFICE

Scientists who serve as policy makers and experts bring views and knowledge into policy that are vital but too often missing. We need more scientists in policy. Why not you?

- Start small—think local. City councils and local policy positions are great places to help make change.
- Consider the issues that really matter to you and find a policy job that allows you to help solve that problem.
- Gain support and training to run for office from experienced groups like **314 Action** and **She Should Run**, among others.
- No matter which option or options you choose to engage with policymakers, the goal is the same – to build trust and form a relationship. Policymakers (and their staff) are much more likely to take your suggestions and turn to you with their questions if they know and trust you. One way to do that is to be in touch with the policymaker regularly (although not constantly) and to get back to them quickly if they ask questions. And remember that virtual meetings are a great way to put a face to a name.



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Volunteer

ENGAGE ON CAMPUS

Building a local support community can help make policy engagement less intimidating and more fun – and you can have a greater impact with more people!

- Join a science policy group if one exists on campus to get plugged into local issues and events.
- If your campus doesn't have a science policy group, start one! [The National Science Policy Network](#) has resources to help you.
- Even without an official group, you and your colleagues can host science policy happy hours, seminars, policymaker letter writing parties, and other events (in person or virtually).



GET INVOLVED DURING ELECTIONS

Important elections take place every year – not just during U.S. presidential races – and every election is an important time to engage.

- Hold a voter registration drive to help students and staff on campus prepare for an election. Be sure to check the rules for collecting and submitting voter registration forms in your state.
- Attend virtual town halls hosted by candidates and ask them about their science platforms.
- Write or call low propensity voters to help encourage more people to vote in the election.
- Ask your family, friends, and colleagues what their voting plan is—how and when they are voting. A plan makes it more likely someone will vote.
- Volunteer for a candidate you support.
- Check out [ScienceVotesTheFuture.org](#) for more information – like the fact that, in the 2018 election, only 34% of STEM students voted. We need scientists to vote in all elections.



VOLUNTEER WITH SCIENTIFIC SOCIETIES

Scientific societies offer many opportunities for their members to get engaged.

- Take part in events like [AGU Virtual Advocacy Days](#), where experts will walk you through the process of having virtual meetings with policymakers to discuss critical science issues.
- Serve on a society committee or task force connected to policy, communication, or another important role.
- Help societies craft their [position statements](#) on critical science policy issues – you can volunteer to help write statements, or comment on position statements during open member comment periods.
- Take part in “rapid response” programs, which enable a society to contact you when a policymaker or media contact needs quick information from scientists.
- Sign up to be part of a scientific society network or community to find opportunities and receive information about policy outreach and other types of engagement. The [AGU Sharing Science Network](#) offers excellent resources and a cohort of like-minded scientists.

