

AMBASSADOR BADGES TO DO AT HOME

LEGACY: CITIZEN



Public Policy

You want your voice heard. It's so important that one of your Leadership Journeys is about just that—speaking up about, and acting on, issues that are crucial in your world. And if you want your voice heard by government, it helps to know about public policy: the laws and government actions surrounding particular issues. To influence public policy, it's important to know how a citizen can work to affect change in her community, her country, and her world. This Ambassador Citizen badge is your opportunity to find out.

Steps

1. Find out how activists advocate for change
2. Engage as a global citizen
3. Dig into national or state public policy
4. Explore local or community policy
5. See public policy creation in action

Purpose

When I've earned this badge, I'll know about public policies and how I can influence legislation that matters to me.

To earn this badge, please complete one option per step.

STEPS	BADGE REQUIREMENTS	OPTION 1	OPTION 2	OPTION 3
Step 1	Find out how activists advocate for change.	Interview an activist. Find activist interviews online or in a magazine or book. Find out how an activist for an issue you care about influences public policy. Have their campaigns for change been successful? What challenges did they encounter? What advice do they have for you?	Watch a documentary or movie. Find one about an individual or group who pushed for a change in public policy, and screen it for friends and family. Afterward, discuss which tactics used were most successful in gathering support for the cause	Read about women who changed the course of U.S. history. This could be a single biography or several articles about an activist like Rachel Carson, Eleanor Roosevelt, or Susan B. Anthony. Or it could be a book about female suffrage or other issues in which female advocates were instrumental.

<p>Step 2</p>	<p>Engage as a global citizen.</p>	<p>Compare laws. Think about an issue facing policy-makers in America. It might be pollution regulations, marriage laws, or teen texting and driving. Now find out how the issue is regulated in three other countries. What are the biggest differences between public policy in the United States and abroad?</p>	<p>Track a public-policy issue being challenged in another country. There are many laws currently being challenged in countries abroad. For instance, groups are trying to enact whale-hunting laws in Japan. Others are offering legal aid in places like Saudi Arabia, where laws limit women's rights in marriage choice, divorce, child custody, and inheritance. Find one issue and follow its progress. How are the organizations trying to influence change? Are their methods successful?</p>	<p>Explore an international NGO (non-governmental organization). This might be CARE, Heifer International, Doctors Without Borders, or the World Wildlife Federation. Find out how the group tries to change policy and what challenges are involved in trying to influence one issue across national borders. Who does this NGO lobby to effect change?</p>
<p>Step 3</p>	<p>Dig into national or state public policy.</p>	<p>Track your issue. For two weeks, follow the issue from both sides in at least three sources, such as national news, websites, and news magazines and newspapers. Pay attention to the people and organizations involved, the changes being advocated, the events, progress, and public opinion. At the end of the two weeks, write a list of the five most effective and least effective actions you noticed. Keep the list for future reference (you can always add to it!).</p>	<p>Talk to an interest group that promotes your issue. For example, you could reach out to the community outreach staff at the American Medical Association, the Association of Women Engineers, or the AAA about their experiences trying to influence policy. Which campaigns have been effective? Which haven't? Take notes on tips and advice.</p>	<p>Compare three different states' positions on your issue. For instance, driving age laws: in South Dakota, you can get a driver's license 3 months after you turn 14; in New Jersey, you must be 17; in California, 16. Some states allow people to carry concealed weapons. Use and possession of fireworks is regulated differently from state to state. There are even laws for how long students must stay in school: 7 states mandate education until age 17, but 29 states allow students to drop out at age 16! Write up a state-to-state comparison and note why the policy originated and whose efforts helped make it that way</p>

<p>Step 4</p>	<p>Explore local or community policy.</p>	<p>Watch a community meeting. Many local groups live stream their meetings on public access TV or via social media. This might be a community organization, school board, student council meeting or city council meeting. Consider these questions: what methods of stating a position seem most effective? Least effective? If a policy decision is reached, do you agree or disagree with it? Talk about your experience with your friends or family.</p>	<p>Compare different local positions. Profile two opposing public officials or committee leaders on one issue. What level of influence does each leader have? What is their history? Share your thoughts on whose actions are most effective with friends or family.</p>	<p>Get to know your local legislator's office. Find a locally elected public official and research on their website or social media page how they like to interact with their constituents. Reach out and ask about how the public gives feedback, and what kind of feedback is most effective. What do they recommend as the best way for a citizen to get her voice heard?</p>
<p>Step 5</p>	<p>See public policy creation in action.</p>	<p>Shadow a policy-maker. On social media or in the newspaper, follow a policy-maker for a day or week. Things to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is a typical day like? Is this a career you'd like to have? • How do they hear from and get input from their constituents about an issue? How do they navigate the systems to make change? • What sources do they use? What statistical data? Where is it from? Who influences their fact-finding, and how? 	<p>Volunteer. Volunteer for a day (or more!) to help online or over the phone with a local community group, politician, or governmental agency. TIP: If you can't arrange to volunteer, then talk to staff members about key policy issues, policy-influencing, how they increase awareness of issues, and how they get data to use in building support for their causes.</p>	<p>Interview a policy-maker. Check online for videotaped interviews with policy-makers. Watch it and take careful notes. If possible, reach out by email, social media, phone or comment on the video to ask informed questions about the public policy issue at-hand.</p>