



SPEAKING UP

HOW TO PARTICIPATE

Rhode Island, like the United States, has a representative democracy. That means we choose people to represent us in government by voting for them in elections. American citizens gain the right to vote when they turn 18. Voting is an important civic responsibility!

Even after election day, elected officials need to hear from the people that they represent.

WHAT IF...

Someone proposes a bill with which you really...

agree

or

disagree

What can you do?

YOU CAN...



Contact your government officials by mail, email, or telephone, or speak with them in person to let them know what you think. Find their contact information at sos.ri.gov/govdirectory.



Write a letter to your newspaper explaining why you agree or disagree with the proposed bill.



Write a statement about the bill and ask people to sign it. This is called a petition.



Find people who agree with you and hold a peaceful demonstration or rally. Rhode Islanders of all ages come to the Rhode Island State House with signs to make sure their government knows what they want.



Give your opinion (testify) at a hearing. A hearing is when a committee of legislators gather to hear others' opinions of the proposed bill, and prepare to make a recommendation to the rest of the legislative body.

After legislators have considered a proposed bill, they vote on it in the Rhode Island State House. You can watch the vote from the public galleries in the Senate and House of Representatives, or on Capitol TV, rilin.state.ri.us/captv.