Through the [six-stage action civics project process](https://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/hss/civics-project-guidebook/index.html#/lessons/0sggGFWN2sG8OoQXXaL67lPtLUdwkuEx), students complete the real work of engaged, informed participants in a democracy by *identifying issues and advocating for change in their communities*. This includes identifying an issue of importance to them and their community, conducting research on that issue to make an informed action plan, taking action, and reflecting and showcasing their work. During [Stage 5: Taking Action](https://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/hss/civics-project-guidebook/index.html#/lessons/ucNl-f-sOvwEfOQcAUODwfAu95xwsNjB), students will engage in outreach to decision makers in an effort to gain support for their desired goals.

For students advocating for state-level change in the form of new or amended laws, their state legislator and their aides may be key decision makers. Below you will find some best practices to most effectively and efficiently support student outreach to their state senators and representatives.

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| **Best Practices:** * Embed opportunities throughout the prior project stages to help prepare students for engaging in the outreach process (e.g. do initial research on existing legislation that may be relevant, practice writing/sending emails, organizing and analyzing data they may want to share).
* When reaching out to state legislators, students should begin by contacting the office of their representative and/or senator. Students who email their legislators may receive responses from their legislative aide who plays a very important role in managing communication and calendars.
	+ *Note: State representatives and senators are based on home not school addresses. You can use this resource to help identify students' representatives and senators:* [*Find My Legislator*](https://malegislature.gov/Search/FindMylegislator)*.*
* Be mindful of the legislative calendar; try to minimize outreach during peak times of debate and/or recesses.
	+ *You can use the "Hearing and Events" resource to follow upcoming sessions and hearings:* [*Massachusetts State Legislature.*](https://malegislature.gov/)
* When sending an email, be sure students include:
	+ Their name(s) and home address(es) in the signature line
	+ Their school, school address, and school telephone number in the email
	+ How to best follow up to the email outreach
	+ An overview of the project and specific request
* Streamline communication as much as possible (e.g. if you have 6 students who are planning to send emails to the same representative's office, facilitate their combining them into one note with multiple asks).
* If students have not received a response to an email within a week, follow up with both an email confirming receipt and a phone call, if possible. It is also OK to start with a phone call!
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