



A Pennsylvania Citizen's Guide to Advocating for State Legislation

1. What is Advocacy?

Advocacy is taking action to support a cause or policy. It means making your voice heard—individually or collectively—to influence decisions made by lawmakers and government agencies. In Pennsylvania, advocacy can shape everything from how reproductive health is protected to how schools are funded and how our environment is safeguarded.

2. Legislative vs. Administrative Advocacy in Pennsylvania

Legislative advocacy focuses on influencing the Pennsylvania General Assembly, which is made up of the State Senate and House of Representatives.

Examples in PA:

- Urging a state senator and committee chair to bring a bill you support up for a vote.
- Urging your state Representative to vote YES on a specific bill that is up for a vote in Committee or "on the floor" (when the whole House votes).
- Calling or emailing lawmakers to oppose a budget that underfunds healthcare.

Administrative Advocacy targets how laws are interpreted and carried out by executive agencies like the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Health, or Education.

3. Understanding the Pennsylvania Legislative Process

- Governor: Can sign or veto bills.
- PA General Assembly (203 State Representatives, 50 State Senators).
- Legislative Committees: Often where bills are delayed or killed—committee chairs are key targets.

How a Bill Becomes Law in PA:

1. Introduced in the House or Senate
2. Referred to a committee for hearings and amendments

3. Passed by chamber
4. Sent to other chamber for the same process
5. If both pass, sent to the governor to sign or veto
6. Overrides require a two-thirds vote in both chambers

Constitutional amendments begin as a bill. To amend our state constitution, the bill must pass two consecutive legislative sessions to earn a spot at the ballot box. Then, voters must pass the amendment.

4. Examples of Advocacy Strategy

- Pressure a Committee Chair: Identify who controls a bill's movement and focus efforts there.
- Elevate local voices or affected constituents: Use storytelling to influence lawmakers.
- Publicly shame a lawmaker promoting bad legislation.

5. Effective Advocacy Tactics in Pennsylvania

- Writing to Lawmakers: Use the General Assembly website to find your legislators and personalize your message, send a handwritten postcard, or sign up for organizations you support and send their action alerts.
- Organizing Rallies: Hold events in the Capitol Rotunda, district offices, or symbolic locations.
- Lawmaker Visits: Schedule meetings with clear asks and supportive materials.
- Op-Eds and Letters: Target regional and local publications with timely, relevant content.
- Social Media Advocacy: Tag lawmakers, express support or opposition to sponsored legislation on their Facebook pages, and amplify key messages.

6. Key Advocacy Organizations in Pennsylvania

- **Women's Law Project**
Website: <https://www.womenslawproject.org/>
Sign Up: <https://www.womenslawproject.org/action-alerts/>
- **Planned Parenthood PA Advocates**
Website: <https://www.plannedparenthoodaction.org/planned-parenthood-pennsylvania-advocates>
Sign Up: <https://www.weareplannedparenthoodaction.org/a/pppa-update>
- **Maternity Care Coalition**
Website: <https://maternitycarecoalition.org/>
Sign Up: <https://maternitycarecoalition.org/get-involved/use-your-voice-advocate>
- **New Voices for Reproductive Justice**

Website: <https://www.newvoicesrj.org/>

Sign Up: <https://www.newvoicesrj.org/get-involved>

- **ACLU of Pennsylvania**

Website: <https://www.aclupa.org/>

Sign Up: <https://action.aclu.org/signup/pa-email-updates>

- **Pennsylvania Youth Congress**

Website: <https://payouthcongress.org/contact/>

- PYC's directory of LGBTQ orgs in PA: <https://payouthcongress.org/directory/>

7. Defending State Courts

Defending state courts is an urgent priority in Pennsylvania in 2025. With the rapid erosion of our federal rights, state courts and state constitutions have become the final line of defense for many civil rights—most obviously reproductive freedom. Lucky for Pennsylvanians, the Pennsylvania Constitution has more equality provisions than the U.S. Constitution including an explicit Equal Rights Amendment of 1971, which was dormant for many years before becoming restored in 2024. This means we now have a more comprehensive state-based constitutional right to be free of sex-based discrimination in Pennsylvania. State court judges interpret our constitution, including the PA ERA, and are elected. Pennsylvania elects judges to all levels of the judiciary, including the Supreme Court, Superior Court, Commonwealth Court, and county courts. These judges rule on the constitutionality of state laws and public policy. This makes every judicial election crucial for civil rights advocates.

PA courts are under attack because it is the final frontier of defense. They must be defended.

What you can do:

Vote in judicial elections, especially this year on Tuesday, November 5, 2025.

Research judicial candidates using BallotReady or Vote411.

Educate others and mobilize voters—judicial races often have low turnout.

Sign up/volunteer with key voter education organizations:

New Pennsylvania Project: <https://www.newpaproject.org/take-action/get-involved/>

Pennsylvanians for Modern Courts: <https://www.pmconline.org/volunteer-0>

Final Thoughts

In a swing state like Pennsylvania, every voice has power. Legislators and judges are responsive to constituents—especially in local and state-level elections. Your advocacy can shape the laws and systems that affect your life. State advocacy is the path to defending Pennsylvania families from regressive federal agenda. Thank you for speaking up!