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How to Engage Your Decision-Makers for Osceola's Public Schools



Prepared by: John Boyd, Director of Government & Labor Relations, Department of Human Resources **Revised:** January 9, 2023 Page 1 of 14

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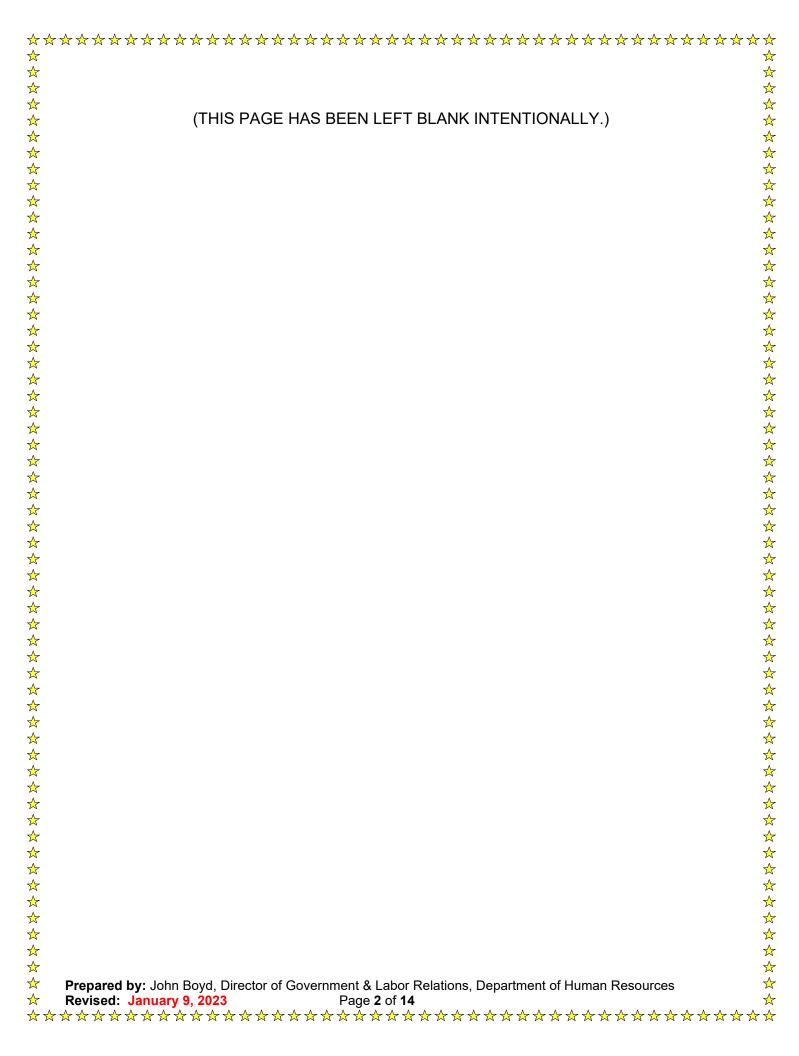


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How to Engage Your Decision-Makers for Osceola's Schools

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Special interests outside Florida and big corporations have deep pockets, hire full-time lobbyists, and monopolize your legislators' schedules so much they struggle to listen to their constituents. Lobbyists spend their days influencing lawmakers and members of the executive branch to introduce, create, or change laws. Corporations have their own lobbyists who work on behalf of individual companies. Lobbyists for foreign governments and businesses work on behalf of foreign countries. Nonprofit and special interest lobbyists work on behalf of various organizations and causes. Association lobbyists represent industries, trades, and professions. Full-time free-lance lobbyists work on behalf of any clients who hire them.

Osceola Public Schools Fast Facts

- ✓ In 2020, Florida ranked 41st out of 50 states in per student educational expenditures. [Source: Cornman, S.Q., Phillips, J.J., Howell, M.R., and Zhou, L. (2022). Revenues and Expenditures for Public Elementary and Secondary Education: FY 20 (NCES 2022-301). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved [date] from https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch.].
 - Florida = \$10,305
 - United States National Average = \$13,489
- ✓ In 2022, Florida's Free and Reduced Lunch rate was 63.9%; Osceola's was 74.1%. (Source: Florida Department of Education)
- ✓ In 2022, Osceola received 2.36% of state education funding but had 2.48% of Florida's entire student enrollment. (Source: Florida Department of Education)
 - Osceola 75,048.09 UFTE* Students (or 2.57%)
 - Florida 2,917,321.99 UFTE* Students
 - Osceola \$567,952,563, or \$568.0 Million (or 2.49%)
 - Florida = \$22,792,073,717, or \$22.8 Billion
- ✓ That 0.08% difference between UFTE and K-12 total funding was still \$18,373,391.24 or \$18.4 Million, that Osceola County schools and students did NOT receive.
 - * An unweighted full-time-equivalent (UFTE) for a student in Kindergarten to Grade 3 = 720 hours of instruction and in Grades 4 to 12 = 900 hours of instruction (or one regular school year's instruction). For most students, one UFTE equals one student.

Now is the time for Osceola parents, students, and advocates of public education to engage their decision-makers, to act, and to be heard.

Tools for positive change are included in this document.

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Ten Smart Steps for Parents, Students, and Others to be Heard

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1. Find out who your legislators are, their committee assignments, and their positions and voting histories on issues important to you.

State Representatives

http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Representatives/representatives.aspx

State Senators

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http://www.flsenate.gov/Senators/

2. Be aware of the legislative calendar and how a bill becomes a law.

Session Dates

- http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/FileStores/Web/HouseContent/Approved/ClerksOffice/I mportantLegislativeDates.pdf
- o https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Calendar/2023/Session%20Dates%202022-12-01%20082214.PDF

House Calendars and Schedules

http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/HouseSchedule/houseschedule.aspx?sui=z3bz bq97drw=-

Senate Calendars and Schedules

http://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Calendars

How a Bill Becomes a Law (House)

https://www.myfloridahouse.gov/api/document/house?Leaf=HouseContent/opi/Lists/Just %20for%20Students/Attachments/4/How%20an%20Idea%20Becomes%20a%20Law% 20(Advanced).pdf

How a Bill Becomes a Law (Senate)

- https://www.flsenate.gov/PublishedContent/ADMINISTRATIVEPUBLICATIONS/idea-tolaw.pdf
- 3. Find and join groups who share your focus and who work for the same goals.

Examples may include, but are not limited to, the Florida Parent-Teacher Association, Florida Education Association, Fund Education Now, and Whole Child Education, etc.

4. Write a letter or e-mail to your legislator.

Tips for writing an effective letter and an example are included in this document.

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5. Follow-up your letter or e-mail with a phone call to your legislator.

- ✓ Before you call, plan your message carefully.
- ✓ Organize your thoughts, and make notes to help you keep focus.
- ✓ Discuss only one issue per phone call.

6. Visit your legislator in person.

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- ✓ If possible, call or write in advance to make an appointment.
- ✓ If your legislator is not available, request to meet with his or her legislative assistant.

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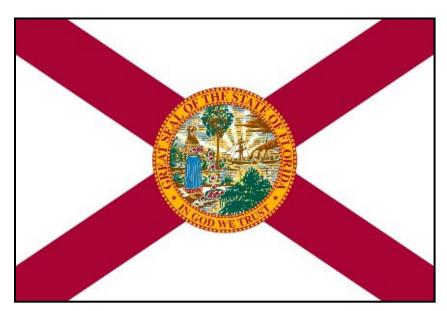
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- ✓ Before your visit, plan your message carefully.
- ✓ Prepare a one-page fact sheet about your message for your legislator to help him or her remember what you present. The first page of this document includes one example.

General Tips for Visits with Decision-Makers

- Contact your legislator about a particular issue before the Legislature takes action on it.
- Make sure you understand the legislative process to help you express your ideas effectively.
- Explain to your legislator how you think current laws (or a particular bill, if it becomes law) will affect your children, your business, your community, and you.
- Be polite and reasonable, even if you disagree strongly with your legislator.
- Suggest a course of action and offer assistance.
- Keep your message positive, and focus on children.



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- 7. Follow bills in committee, and read how your legislator voted.
 - The Legislative Tracking system allows users to
 - create a free account.

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- subscribe to specific bills and committees and
- receive automatic updates on any changes to them throughout the legislative process.

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Legislative Tracking Sign-Up

 http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/MyHouse/accountpreferences.aspx?newUs er=true

Legislative Tracking Log-In

- http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/MyHouse/login.aspx
- 8. Keep writing, calling, and visiting your legislators to keep your message visible.
- 9. Show your appreciation for lawmakers who listen to you (e.g., thank you notes), and politely express your disappointment with those who do not.
- 10. Celebrate your victories, and "remember in November." Vote!



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Osceola Legislative Delegation

Representative Fred Hawkins District 35

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Fred.Hawkins@myfloridahouse.gov

Capitol Office

315 House Office Building 402 South Monroe Street Tallahassee. FL 32399-1300 Capitol Office Phone: (850) 717-5035

District Office

Suite 308 13000 Avalon Lake Drive Orlando, FL 32828-6448 District Office Phone: (407) 249-4204

Legislative Aide: Ben Rembaum

District Aides: Kayla Derrick; Rocky Haag

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Representative Kristen Arrington District 46



Kristen.Arrington@myfloridahouse.gov

Capitol Office

1302 The Capitol 402 South Monroe Street Tallahassee. FL 32399-1300 Capitol Office Phone: (850) 717-5046

District Office

3 Courthouse Square, Suite 219 Kissimmee, FL 34741-5440 District Office Phone: (407) 846-5016

Legislative Aide: Carla Rivera-Marrero

District Aide: TBA

Representative Caroline Amesty District 45



Caroline.Amesty@myfloridahouse.gov

Capitol Office

1101 The Capitol 402 South Monroe Street Tallahassee. FL 32399-1300 Capitol Office Phone: (850) 717-5045

District Office

TBA

District Office Phone: TBA

Legislative Assistant: Victoria Estrada **District Secretary:** Joseph Melendez

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Representative Name District 47

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Paula.Stark@myfloridahouse.gov

Senator Victor Torres District 25



torres.oscar.web@flsenate.gov

Capitol Office

1102 The Capitol 402 South Monroe Street Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300 Capitol Office Phone: (850) 717-5047 ☆

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District Office

TBA

District Office Phone: TBA

Legislative Aide: Mercedes Fonseca

District Aide: Peter Vivaldi

Capitol Office

214 Senate Office Building 404 South Monroe Street Tallahassee. FL 32399-1100 Capitol Office Phone: (850) 487-5025

District Office

101 Church Street, Suite 305 Orlando, FL 34741 District Office Phone: (407) 846-5187

Legislative Aides: Debra Booth, Julian Cintron, Lurimar Cruz-Cortes, and Alfred Yorston

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Osceola County School Board

Terry Castillo, Chair

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Julius Melendez District 2



Jon Arguello **District 3**



Heather Kahoun District 4



Erika Booth, Vice Chair **District 5**



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Prepared by: John Boyd, Director of Government & Labor Relations, Department of Human Resources Revised: January 9, 2023 Page **10** of **14** ***********

Tips for Writing Effective Letters to Decision-Makers

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- Include your correct name, address, and phone number in the heading so that your legislator can respond to you.
- Address letters to members of the Florida House of Representatives as follows:

The Honorable John Doe (Office address)

Address letters to members of the Florida Senate as follows:

Senator Jane Doe (Office address)

- Be certain you spell your legislator's name correctly and use the correct address. If you do not, you could lose your audience.
- Keep letters, email, and faxes brief. Never write more than one page. Concise written correspondence is more likely to grab and keep the reader's attention.
- Identify your issue or opinion at the beginning of the letter. Do not bury your main point under trivial text.
- Focus on one issue per letter.
- Support your opinions with facts. Your letter should inform the reader.
- Avoid abbreviations, acronyms, and technical jargon.
- For more impact, personalize each letter instead of sending the same letter to more than one legislator.
- Sign your name.
- Remember to write thank you letters to state representatives or senators who take a strong public stand in support of public education.

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Sample Parent/ Community Member Letter	
	(Your address) (Date)
	The Honorable (Full name of representative) or Senator (Full name of senator) (Office address)
	Dear Representative or Senator (Last name of legislator),
	I am a taxpayer who votes, and I am the parent of a grader at School in your district. I am concerned that my child is not getting a strong public education because the state does not appropriate adequate funds for public schools in Florida, especially Osceola County, and imposes too many unfunded mandates that limit choices for my child.
	Please sponsor and work to pass legislation that makes Florida's education budget meet and exceed the national average, that returns local control to school boards, and that restores the role of parents to direct their children's education and future.
	Thank you for all that you do on behalf of our state.
	Sincerely,
	(Your signature)
	(Your name in print)

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Protocol for Face-to-Face Communications with Legislative Staff

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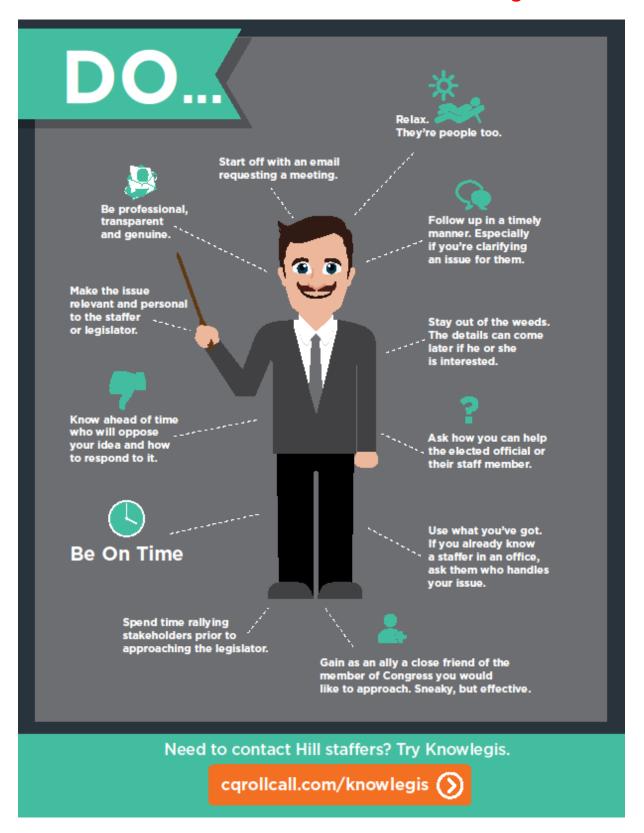
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Prepared by: John Boyd, Director of Government & Labor Relations, Department of Human Resources Revised: January 9, 2023 Page **13** of **14** *********



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Prepared by: John Boyd, Director of Government & Labor Relations, Department of Human Resources Revised: January 9, 2023 Page **14** of **14** *****************