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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:** August 20, 2021 Page 1 of 14

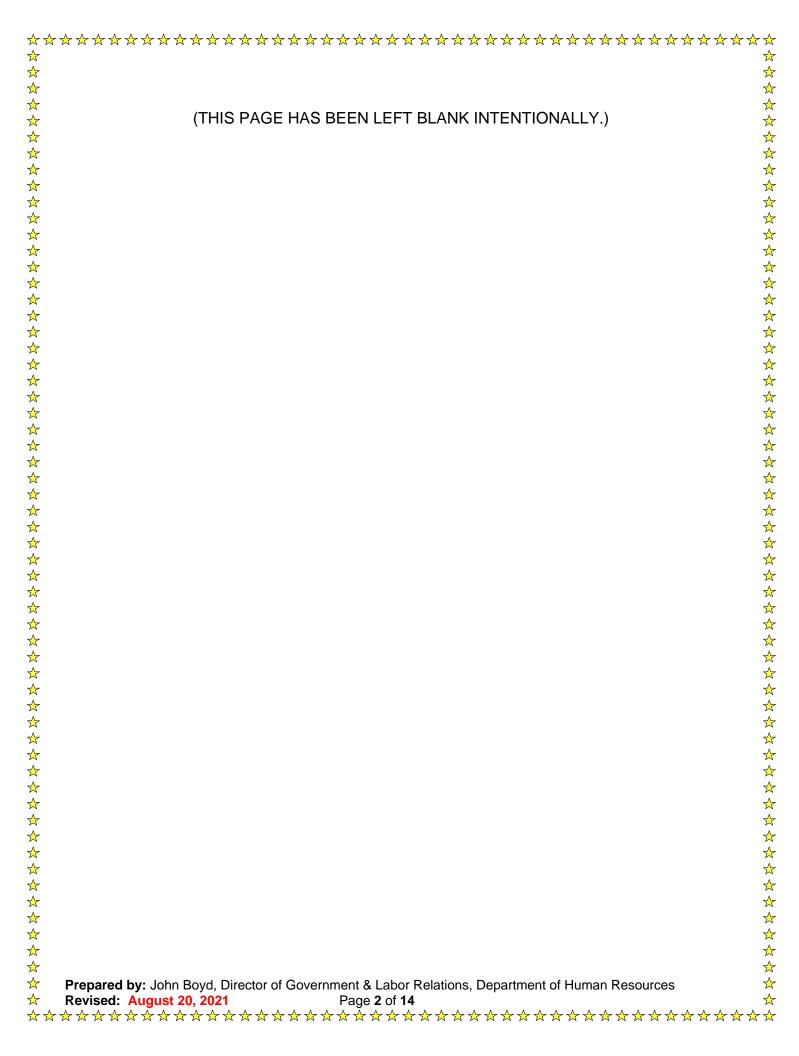


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How to Engage Your Decision-Makers for Osceola's Schools

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Why Engage?

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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 2019, Florida ranked 41st out of 50 states in per student educational expenditures. [Source: Cornman, S.Q., Phillips, J.J., Howell, M.R., and Young, J. (2021). Revenues and Expenditures for Public Elementary and Secondary Education: FY 19 (NCES 2021-302). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved August 19, 2021, from http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch.].
 - Florida = \$9,986
 - United States National Average = \$13,187
- ✓ In 2021, Florida's Free and Reduced Lunch rate was 63.7%; Osceola's was 72.1%. (Source: Florida Department of Education)
- In 2021, Osceola received 2.36% of state education funding but had 2.48% of Florida's entire student enrollment. (Source: Florida Department of Education)
 - Osceola 69,308 students; 69,195 Unweighted Full-Time Equivalency (UFTE)
 - Florida 2,795,691 students; 2,814,129 UFTE
 - \$532.078.042. or \$532.0 Million Osceola = \$22,508,405,502, or \$22.5 Billion Florida =
- ✓ That 0.12% difference was still \$25,928,035 or \$26 Million, that Osceola schools did NOT. receive for our students.

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/2021/Session%20Dates%202020-11-18%20162817.PDF

House Calendars and Schedules

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

Senate Calendars and Schedules

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

How a Bill Becomes a Law (House)

o http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Handlers/LeagisDocumentRetriever.ashx?Leaf=HouseC ontent/opi/Lists/Just for Students/Attachments/4/How an Idea Becomes a Law (Summary) Color (REVAMP) 2.pdf&Area=House

How a Bill Becomes a Law (Senate)

- o http://www.flsenate.gov/usercontent/publications/2010-2012/idea to law chart.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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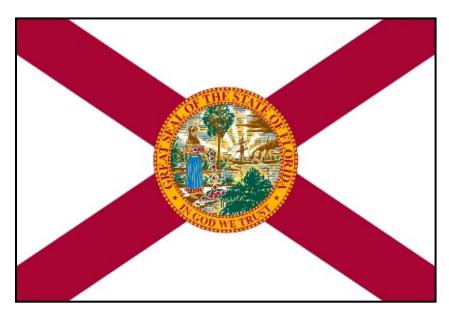
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- ✓ Before your visit, plan your message carefully.
- ✓ Prepare a one-page fact sheet about your message for your legislator to help him or her remember what you present. The first page of this document includes one example.

General Tips for Visits with Decision-Makers

- Contact your legislator about a particular issue before the Legislature takes action on it.
- o 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

o 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

Contact Person: Ms. Barbara Blasingame

Telephone: (863) 968-5666

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Address:

315 Pontotoc Street Auburndale, FL 33823

Florida House of Representatives

Representative Josie Tomkow **District 39**



Josie.Tomkow@myfloridahouse.gov

Capitol Office

209 House Office Building 402 South Monroe Street Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300 Capitol Office Phone: (850) 717-5039 ☆ $\stackrel{\wedge}{\Rightarrow}$

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District Office

315 Pontotoc Street Auburndale, FL 33823-3444 District Office Phone: (863) 968-5666

Legislative Assistant: Barbara Blasingame **District Secretary:** Robyn Bryant

Representative Fred Hawkins District 42



Fred.Hawkins@myfloridahouse.gov

Capitol Office

1401 The Capitol 402 South Monroe Street Tallahassee. FL 32399-1300 Capitol Office Phone: (850) 717-5042

District Office

1211 12th Street, Suite 2. Saint Cloud, Fl. 34769-3713 District Office Phone: (407) 892-0409

Legislative Assistant: Zac Stone **District Secretaries:** Mikayla Goetz

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Florida House of Representatives (Continued)

Representative Kristen Arrington District 43



Kristen.Arrington@myfloridahouse.gov

Capitol Office

1301 The Capitol 402 South Monroe Street Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300 Capitol Office Phone: (850) 717-5043 $\stackrel{\wedge}{\Rightarrow}$

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District Office

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

Legislative Assistant: Eleanor McDonough **District Secretary:** Carla Rivera-Marrero



Florida Senate

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Senator Victor Torres District 15



torres.oscar.web@flsenate.gov

Capitol Office

226 Senate Office Building 404 South Monroe Street Tallahassee, FL 32399-1100 Capitol Office Phone: (850) 487-5015

District Office

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

Legislative Assistants: Gladys Ferrer; Alfred Yorston

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Osceola County School Board

Terry Castillo, Vice Chair District 1

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Julius Melendez District 2



Jon Arguello **District 3**



Clarence Thacker, Chair District 4



Robert Bass District 5



Terry Castillo 817 Bill Beck Boulevard Kissimmee, FL 34744 Phone: (407) 577-5022

terry.castillo@osceolaschools.net

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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 much standardized testing that limits 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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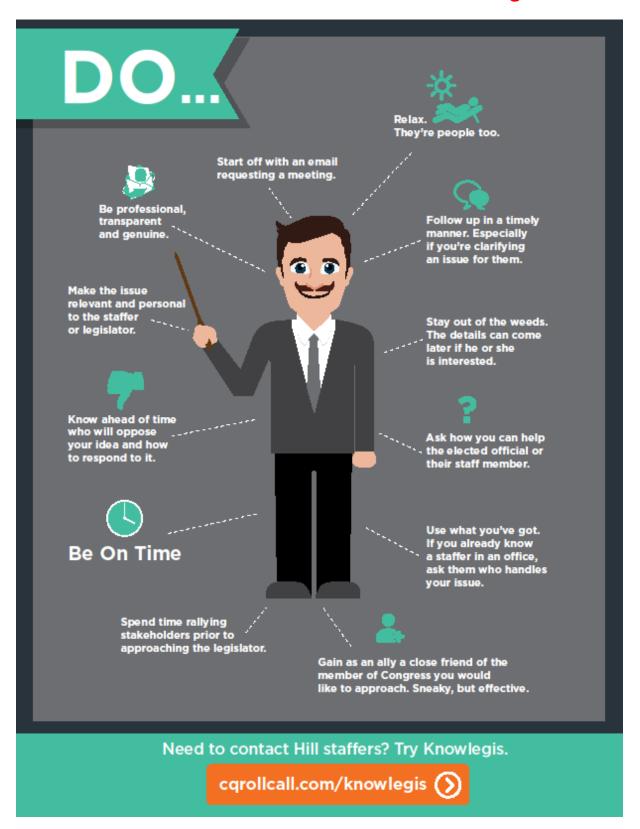
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