



GUIDE TO YOUR LOCAL AND STATE LEADERS

Local and state officials play a significant role in shaping our communities, making a wide range of decisions that affect our daily lives.

Despite having far-reaching impacts on issues ranging from education spending to affordable housing, voter turnout for local elections is frequently low. Fewer voters can mean outcomes are less likely to reflect the priorities and interests of the entire community.

Our guide is intended to give an overview of elected positions at the local and state levels, help you identify your elected officials, and assist you in learning more about candidates running for office. We hope this guide better connects you with your elected officials and empowers you to make your voice heard in your community!

Check out the resource page at the end of the guide for voter information and other helpful links.

ELECTION CYCLE IN CONNECTICUT

Every year there is an election of some kind in Connecticut. Local elections happen during *odd*-numbered years while state elections occur in *even*-numbered years.

Odd-Numbered Years	Local Offices (e.g. Mayor, Board of Education, etc.)
Even-Numbered Years	State Offices (e.g. Governor, State Senator, State Representative, etc.)

LOCAL LEADERS

Connecticut has 169 towns and cities, each with their own local government. The most common forms of local government include:

Selectman-Town Meeting: The First Selectman is elected by a town's voters and is responsible for running the day-to-day operations of the local government. Towns may have an open or representative town meeting that serves as the legislative body for the town. In an Open Town Meeting, all of the town's voters may vote on all matters. A Representative Town Meeting means residents elect Town Meeting Members who vote on their behalf.

Council-Manager: The town/city council consists of elected members who serve as the municipality's legislative body. A town or city manager is hired by the council to run the day-to-day operations of the local government.

Mayor-Council: The mayor is directly elected and recognized as the formal head of the local government. The powers of a mayor vary greatly depending on local laws. The town/city council are also elected officials who serve as the municipality's legislative body.

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR LOCAL LEADERS

What form of government does your town/city have? (You can find out [here](#)).

Who administers the day-to-day operations of your town? Are they elected officials?

Who serves as your town's legislative body? Are they elected officials?

Is there an election this year for your local leaders? If so, who is on the ballot?

LOCAL BOARD OF EDUCATION

Local boards of education derive their power and authority from the State of Connecticut. As agents of the State, local boards of education have a direct impact on the education of K-12 students in their district.

Local boards of education vary in size and members may be elected, appointed, or both. A board of education makes district-wide decisions in areas such as school policy, budget, curriculum, and programming. In addition, the board is responsible for hiring a superintendent and evaluating their performance.

The superintendent is the board's chief executive officer and is responsible for the school system's day-to-day operations.

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR LOCAL BOARD OF EDUCATION

Who are the members of your local board of education? (You can typically find this information on your school district's website.)

Are members elected or appointed?

Who is your superintendent?

Is there an election this year for your local board of education? If so, who is on the ballot?

PARTICIPATION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Local government and board of education meetings are generally open to the public. Meeting date, time, and location, as well as the agenda, can be found on your town/city's website. Members of the public may participate during the public comment session. Unable to attend a meeting? You can also find recordings and meeting minutes on your town/city's website.

When and where does your town/city's legislative body meet?

When and where does your board of education meet?

What is the procedure for public comment? Do you have to register ahead of time? Is there a time limit for speaking?

Legislative Body:

Board of Education:

STATE LEADERS

The governor holds the highest office in state government. The lieutenant governor is the second highest government official in Connecticut. Both the governor and lieutenant governor serve four-year terms and there are no term limits in Connecticut. The governor and lieutenant governor are elected jointly.

Governor: As the head of the Executive Branch, the governor is responsible for administering and enforcing state laws. The governor develops the state budget, which must then be approved by the General Assembly. The governor also has the authority to sign, veto, or take no action on bills that are passed by the General Assembly.

Lieutenant Governor: The lieutenant governor is the President of the Senate. In the event of the governor's death, resignation, or removal from office, the lieutenant governor would become the governor.

STATE LEADERS

The Connecticut General Assembly (CGA) is the Legislative Branch of the State of Connecticut. The CGA is made up of the Senate and the House of Representatives. The CGA is responsible for passing laws concerning education, the environment, housing, public health, the collection and allocation of funds, and other matters.

Senate: There are 36 members in the Connecticut Senate. Senators are elected in even-numbered years from the districts where they live. Senators serve for two-year terms and there are no term limits. The lieutenant governor is the President of the Senate and presides over deliberations. The lieutenant governor may only cast a vote in the event of a tie.

House of Representatives: There are 151 members in the Connecticut House of Representatives. Representatives are elected in even-numbered years from the districts where they live. Representatives serve for two-year terms and there are no term limits. Members of the House elect a Speaker who presides over deliberations.

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR STATE LEADERS

Who is the Governor? Lieutenant Governor?

Who is your State Senator? (You can find the information [here](#).)

What committee(s) does your Senator serve on?

Who is your State Representative? (You can find the information [here](#).)

What committee(s) does your Representative serve on?

Is there an election this year for your state leaders? If so, who is on your ballot for Governor/Lieutenant Governor?

State Senator?

State Representative?

PARTICIPATION AT THE STATE LEVEL

There are over 25 different committees in the Connecticut General Assembly.

Each year, committees decide which bills will go through the legislative process. Before voting on legislative matters, committees hold public hearings to listen to input and testimony from the public.

When and where does the Education Committee meet? (You can find the information [here](#).)

What is the procedure for public comment at a hearing? How do you register to speak or submit written testimony? Is there a time limit? (You can find the information [here](#).)

HOW CAN I FIND OUT MORE ABOUT A CANDIDATE?

There are a number of ways to learn more about candidates and where they stand on issues that are important to you and your community.

- Attend a public meeting such as a candidate debate, forum, or town hall.
- Email questions to candidates.
- Check out a candidate's website and social media accounts.
- Read through campaign materials.
- Follow the local and state news.
- Research a candidate's voting history (if they have been elected before)
- Consult nonpartisan resources online.
- Talk to your family, friends, and neighbors.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

To get you started, we've generated some sample questions to ask candidates about their stances on education. You can use the same format to ask about other issues that are also important to you.

- What do you think are the most significant issues affecting public education?
- What are your top priorities for education?
- How will you support equitable funding for all students?
- How will you advocate at the state level to advance equitable funding for all students?
- How will you involve the community in decision-making?

CANDIDATE GUIDE

Make a list of issues that are important to you. After doing some research, fill in each's candidate's position on the issue.

Race for: _____

Issue	Candidate A:	Candidate B:	Candidate C:

RESOURCES

League of Women Voters: www.lwv.org

Rock the Vote: www.rockthevote.org

Vote.org: www.vote.org

Vote411: www.vote411.org