Political Engagement

Take the Initiative—Individually and Collectively

What can I do?
What can we do?
Persisting pays off.

The Alberta Teachers’ Association
www.teachers.ab.ca
What can I do?

**Educate yourself**
- What is your constituency?
- Who is your MLA?
- Where is his or her constituency office?
- Do you know representatives of the other political parties in your constituency?
- Do you know how to contact your MLA?
- Does your MLA keep you informed on political activities?
- Do you know your MLA’s views on education?

**Keep up with political/education activities**
- Skim newspapers/magazines/websites from an education perspective.
- Listen to in-depth coverage of provincial political events on radio or television.
- Ask to be put on the Alberta Teachers’ Association’s e-mail distribution list for legislative summaries.
- Read Alberta Hansard.
- Decide that you are going to keep yourself informed on political/education issues.

**Make contact**
- Always remember that your MLA is human and has feelings.
- Commending your MLA for something well done or some stand taken is important—your views count.
- Keep in touch with your MLA by phone, e-mail or letter.
- Keep your MLA informed about what you see happening in education—good and correct information is valuable.
- Raise education issues whenever possible.
- Try to meet regularly and, if possible, informally with your MLA.
- Try to attend constituency meetings, such as town hall meetings, and raise education questions.

**Join a political party**
- It is easier to influence from inside than from outside.
- Be visible.
- Don’t have a one-track mind—education should be only one of your issues.
- Promote education resolutions at political party conventions.
- Get involved at the constituency association level.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; it’s the only thing that ever has.”  
Margaret Mead
Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has. Margaret Mead

Consider three things you can do this year to make a difference.

What can we do?

Watch

- If you have a single MLA, establish a small group to monitor the media and report on political activities.
- If you have more than one MLA, set up a small group for each MLA and monitor the media and political activities related to that MLA.
- Monitor Alberta Hansard either locally or through the Alberta Teachers’ Association.
- Cover all local political forums and monitor education issues.
- Establish contact with all political parties in the constituency/constituencies.

Publicize education politics

- Send regular political updates to your audiences by e-mail or use a local newsletter.
- Post legislative summaries or notices of political events in schools.
- Keep local media informed about education activities taking place in the legislature.
- Meet regularly with representatives of all major political parties in the constituency/constituencies.

Educate your MLA

- Arrange a meeting between teachers and local MLAs to discuss your work and learn about theirs.
- Invite your MLA to socials to meet teachers on a casual basis.
- Invite your MLA to debate with students.
- Ask your MLA to visit your school for a day and spend time with teachers and students.

Hold regional meetings

- Get local teachers, teacher representatives and MLAs together regularly to discuss issues—ensure these are information-sharing sessions, not simply opportunities to attack the government of the day.
- As a group, meet with all major political parties in the constituency/constituencies at least once a year to discuss education.
- Meet with other groups with an interest in education to establish alliances.
Did you know?

- Regular legislative summaries are available to any teacher from the Alberta Teachers’ Association?
- A political engagement grant is available to locals to support implementation of a political engagement plan?
- The Alberta Teachers’ Association produces a guide to Alberta’s legislature, which is available to teachers free of charge?
- A workshop on lobbying is available on request from the Alberta Teachers’ Association?
- Assistance in planning political activities is available at any time from the Alberta Teachers’ Association?

Online resources

- Alberta Teachers’ Association — www.teachers.ab.ca
- Alberta Education — http://education.alberta.ca
- Legislative Assembly of Alberta — www.assembly.ab.ca

Contact your MLA.