

Why Advocacy

Why is advocacy important? Isn't our direct service work enough?

As the ELCA, we believe God is calling us into the world to serve together. Through our direct service, we aid immediate needs before us. Through our advocacy work, we impact systemic, long-lasting change.

The public policies our officials write, amend and ultimately adopt can have ongoing effects on our neighbors who are struggling with hunger and living with poverty, as well as God's creation. By telling our lawmakers how Lutheran ministries help our world and urging them to advance legislation that reflects these commitments, we are helping create opportunities to overcome poverty, promote peace and dignity, and defend God's creation.

Why does the ELCA understand advocacy to be part of its mission?

We are a church that is energized by lively engagement in our faith and public life. We serve in response to God's love to meet human needs and protect creation. When we, as ELCA members, lift our voices together to influence policies that advance the common good, we further God's work in our world.

We are also a church that thinks of governments as helpful ways God is active in our world. This is clear from the very first generation of Lutheran reformers and their actions. When you write your public official, you are uniting with an apostolic community of Lutherans concerned with how public policies work for our neighbors as a matter of faith.

In its very first social statement, "The Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective," from 1991, our church committed to "work with and on behalf of the poor, the powerless and those who suffer, using its power and influence with political and economic decision-making bodies to develop and advocate policies that seek to advance justice, peace and the care of creation."

How does the ELCA determine its advocacy priorities?

ELCA advocacy works for change in public policy based on the priorities framed by ELCA social policy and expressed by ELCA members. To be effective, advocacy draws directly from Lutheran ministries and projects around the world and in communities across the United States. To learn more about specific priorities the ELCA e-Advocacy Network engages, visit the [Advocacy Resource](#) page.

Does the U.S. Constitution permit religious bodies to advocate?

Yes, it does. The advocacy of the ELCA and other religious bodies does not violate what is often referred to as "the separation of church and state." The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution guarantees the exercise of religious freedom, including for the public witness of religious bodies. Based on our Lutheran tradition, our [Church in Society social statement](#) describes our church's relationship with governments as one of "institutional separation and functional interaction."

What are the advocacy ministries of the ELCA?

The ELCA Washington Office helps facilitate the national network of ELCA members advocating on federal policy issues that affect vulnerable people and God's creation.

The Lutheran Office for World Community monitors the work of the United Nations on behalf of the ELCA and The Lutheran World Federation, working for peace, dignity and reconciliation for all people.

State Public Policy Offices are Lutheran advocacy presences at the state government level, speaking out on hunger-related causes. This network of state offices is supported by ELCA World Hunger and is a partnership of the churchwide ministries, synods, social ministry organizations and other stakeholders.

Corporate Social Responsibility ministry addresses the social impact of corporations and their practices and governance by engaging in shareholder advocacy and dialogue with company representatives, boards and executives.

How can I get involved?

ELCA advocacy is most effective when Lutherans across the country are involved and active. The ELCA has professional policy staff who help facilitate Lutheran advocacy efforts, but members of Congress want to hear from their constituents — your stories, experiences and influence impact their decisions.

Here are steps you can take right now:

Join the ELCA e-Advocacy Network. By signing up for the ELCA e-Advocacy Network, you will receive legislative updates and key advocacy opportunities in your inbox. You can also share these action alerts with your personal network on social media.

Reach out to your members of Congress by email, letter, or phone — and encourage your congregation to do the same. Each of us has a unique story, and we are part of a larger story that makes up the ELCA. Explain why, as their constituent, issues affect you, your neighbors, your community and our larger world. Let them know what positions you'd like them to take on crucial issues affecting our vulnerable neighbors and God's creation. By reminding our officials of what Lutherans do to serve people in their constituencies and around the world, we establish that we speak from places of compassion, credibility and concern.

If you have a Lutheran State Public Policy office in your state, get involved in this ministry. The ELCA has offices strategically located in several state capitals with the purpose of engaging ELCA members in advocacy for hunger-related issues in the state legislature.

VISIT THE ELCA ADVOCACY WEBSITE:

<https://www.elca.org/Our-Work/Publicly-Engaged-Church/Advocacy>