

DECIDING TO GET INVOLVED

Making the decision to get involved in legislation is a personal decision. If you have lived experience that would be impacted by the legislation you are thinking about supporting or opposing, making the decision to get involved could be overwhelming. Since there are so many ways to get involved, having some guidance in making that decision can be helpful. Here are a few things to consider as you decide what is best for you.



The importance of story

Senators want to know how legislation will impact the people they were elected to represent. Organizations and agencies can give information that will help understand some of it, but there is nothing quite like hearing a personal story to help drive home a point. Personal experiences help senators see how the bill might change life for real people. A story is easier to remember than a statistic and this can help senators during debate.



Sharing your personal story

One way to educate and inform is through sharing your personal story to support or oppose legislation. If you choose to share your story, you get to choose how much you share and with whom. If this is the first time you have considered sharing your story, talking it through with someone you trust may help as you decide how to do that. Whether you decide to share with a group of friends, on your social media, testify at a hearing, or in some other way, you don't have to do it alone. Survivors Rising can help with deciding how to share your story and offer support throughout the process.



Going public with your story

If you decide to testify at a committee hearing, you need to know that these hearings are open to the public, transcribed word-for-word, and live streamed on Nebraska Public Television (NET). If you are comfortable with your identity being public, sharing in person at a hearing may be a good fit for you. If it isn't safe for you to share publicly, or you aren't comfortable doing so, there are still many ways for you to get involved such as speaking with senators one on one, talking to your friends about the legislation, and even sending a letter to be read at a hearing.



Building a support team

Having people who will be there for you no matter what you choose to do is important. Having support can be especially helpful if you decide to testify in person at a hearing. You may hear others share about their experiences while waiting to testify, and some of their stories can be hard to hear. Asking friends or family that you can trust to be part of your support team may seem strange, but knowing that you have someone walk through the process, or just be there with you, can help keep you calm and feeling confident. It can also be helpful to have guidance from other survivors who have shared their stories to support or oppose legislation. To speak with survivors who have experience with the Nebraska legislature, contact Survivors Rising.



Learning the process

If you have never done work to impact legislation before, don't worry, the *Survivors Speak* guide was created just for you! The whole guide is full of information that will help you throughout the entire process, but it might be helpful to start with "How Bills Become Law in Nebraska" and "Ways to Impact Laws in Nebraska" in *Survivors Speak*. You can also connect with an organization that supports or is working on legislation you are interested in by consulting the "Support Resources" Appendix in *Survivors Speak* and even follow the progress of bills you are interested in online using a bill tracker.



Time commitments

Committees will hear multiple bills during a hearing, one after the other. If you decide to testify at a hearing, you may have to devote an entire afternoon to the process. Not everyone can take off an entire afternoon during the week; if you aren't able to take the time, don't worry! There is more than one way that you can share your experience to make an impact on legislation, including meeting with senators outside of hearings which doesn't take so much time.



Getting to the Capitol

All committee hearings are held in Lincoln, Nebraska. This can be a barrier to testifying in person for many people who want to share their stories. If you want to get involved by testifying in person and don't have access to transportation, consider reaching out to Survivors Rising to see if someone near you will be going and willing to carpool. Remember, if you can't get to Lincoln but still want to share your experience in a way that will impact legislation, there are lots of ways to do that without going to Lincoln.

Resources

- Bill tracker: <https://www.nebraska.gov/billtracker/>
- If you have decided to get involved and want to learn more about different ways to do so, check out "Ways to Impact Laws in Nebraska" in *Survivors Speak*
- If you need support and guidance in deciding to get involved in the Nebraska legislative process, contact Survivors Rising: <https://survivorsrisingomaha.org/>

"Deciding to Get Involved" is part of *Survivors Speak: How to share your story to advocate for legislative change in Nebraska*. For more information about how you can share your story to advocate for change, check out the full guide at <https://survivorsrisingomaha.org/survivors-speak/>. Please do not reproduce or alter without express written permission from Survivors Rising.