

**WHO
SHOULD I
WRITE TO
ABOUT
...?**

The contents of this booklet are meant to help you start thinking about what topics are important to you and who you might write to about your position. The contents represent only a small portion of ideas to consider and are not meant to limit your advocacy. We encourage you to write about any topic in which you want to see change enacted. If you are interested in researching more about these or other subjects, usa.gov and public.findlaw.com are among the many useful websites with relevant information. There are many resources for finding the names and addresses of your representatives, such as www.commoncause.org/find-your-representative/ and www.usa.gov/elected-officials, among others.

Compiled by Sophie Heath '18

AGRICULTURE

IDEAS TO CONSIDER

- **Animal Welfare Act:** regulates treatment of animals on farms, in factories, and in slaughterhouses
- **Federal Crop Insurance Act:** grants federal funds to farmers and agricultural entities whose crops suffer damage from natural disasters like wildfires, hurricanes, and droughts
- **Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002:** grants about \$16.5 billion annually in agricultural subsidies

- **Rights regarding agricultural liens and regulation of commodity prices**
- **Funding for/ development of agritourism**

- **Rights/regulations regarding :**
 - **Pesticides, insecticides, and other chemicals**
 - **Animal confinement**
 - **Permits to sell produce at markets/stores**
 - **Building additional farm structures**



FEDERAL

- **President**
- **Vice President**
- **US Senator**
- **US Representative**



STATE

- **Governor**
- **District State Senator**
- **District State Assemblymember**
- **Attorney General**



LOCAL

- **Mayor**
- **District Attorney**
- **Sheriff**
- **County Clerk**

ARTS

IDEAS TO CONSIDER

- **Comprehensive Resources for Entrepreneurs in the Arts to Transform the Economy (CREATE) Act:**
 - **Supports the development of arts businesses, jobs, and the growth of the creative economy.**
- **United States Copyright Laws**
- **First Amendment**
 - **Protects artists/groups against censorship**
- **NEA (National Endowment of the Arts)**

- **State Arts Agency**
 - **Maintains public art programs & art collections, allocates funds, facilitates acquisition of artwork**
- **Art grants/funds**
- **Arts Education programs**

- **Art councils**
- **Local museums/galleries**
- **Local arts presenters**



FEDERAL

- **President**
- **Vice President**
- **US Senator**
- **US Representative**

STATE

- **Governor**
- **District State Senator**
- **District State Assemblymember**

LOCAL

- **Mayor**

CIVIL RIGHTS

IDEAS TO CONSIDER

- **Civil Rights Act of 1964 and amendments: protects voting rights for people of color and bans discrimination due to color, race, sex, national origin, religion, or pregnancy**
- **Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972: prohibits discrimination based on sex, including sexual harassment and sexual violence, in education programs and activities**
- **Americans with Disabilities Act**
- **Fair Housing Act**

- **LGBTQ+ discrimination protections**
- **Transgender rights: rights regarding discrimination/ segregation based on gender identity**
- **Criminal justice reform for LGBTQ+ people**

- **Rights regarding identity discrimination such as threatening graffiti/posters in town and harmful messages left on private property**



FEDERAL

- **President**
- **Vice President**
- **US Senator**
- **US Representative**

STATE

- **Governor**
- **District State Senator**
- **District State Assemblymember**
- **Attorney General**

LOCAL

- **Mayor**
- **District Attorney**
- **Sheriff**

EDUCATION

IDEAS TO CONSIDER

- **Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965: “no child left behind” policy, amended in 2015 as Every Student Succeeds Act**
- **Higher Education Opportunity Act: rights regarding affirmative action, financial aid, grants, loans and loan forgiveness, equal opportunity, freedom of speech and association, disabilities, and other concerns in colleges and universities**
- **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act: grants rights regarding free public education to eligible children with disabilities and related services for those children**

- **Compulsory education laws: requires children ages 6–18 to attend a form of schooling**
- **School prayer laws: allows public schools to offer “meditative silence” sessions for religious students**
- **Corporeal punishment laws: protects students from physical punishment in schools**



FEDERAL

- **President**
- **Vice President**
- **US Senator**
- **US Representative**



STATE

- **Governor**
- **District State Senator**
- **District State Assemblymember**
- **Attorney General**

ELDER CARE

IDEAS TO CONSIDER

- **Elder Justice Act of 2009:** provides resources to detect, prevent, intervene in, and prosecute elder neglect, abuse, and exploitation
- **Older Americans Act:** supports home and community-based services like meals-on-wheels, in-home services, and legal services
- **Nursing Home Reform Act:** protects privacy, individuality, dignity, and medical needs.

- **Nursing home regulations**
- **Funding for nursing homes, hospice centers, and other elder-care spaces**

- **Nursing home regulations**
- **Funding for nursing homes, institutions, and other elder-care spaces**



FEDERAL

- **President**
- **Vice President**
- **US Senator**
- **US Representative**



STATE

- **Governor**
- **District State Senator**
- **District State Assemblymember**
- **Attorney General**



LOCAL

- **Mayor**
- **District Attorney**
- **Sheriff**
- **County Clerk**

EMPLOYMENT

IDEAS TO CONSIDER

- **Family and Medical Leave Act:** regulates minimum number of vacation days and maternity leave days offered by government jobs
- **Occupational Safety and Health Act:** rights regarding a safe work environment
- **Title VII of Civil Rights Act of 1964 and amendments:** bans discrimination due to color, race, sex, national origin, religion, or pregnancy
- **Equal Pay Act**

- **Minimum-wage laws**
- **Rights regarding discrimination based on sexual orientation, economic status, and relationship status**



FEDERAL

- **President**
- **Vice President**
- **US Senator**
- **US Representative**



STATE

- **Governor**
- **District State Senator**
- **District State Assemblymember**
- **Attorney General**

ENVIRONMENT

IDEAS TO CONSIDER

- **Clean Air Act**
- **Clean Water Act**
- **Energy Independence and Security Act:** production of clean, renewable fuels; efficiency of buildings, products, and vehicles; research and action on greenhouse gas capture and storage; energy performance of federal government; US energy security



FEDERAL

- **President**
- **Vice President**
- **US Senator**
- **US Representative**

- **Rights/restrictions regarding use of**
 - **Herbicides, pesticides, and other chemicals**
 - **Hydrofracking**
 - **Safe water**



STATE

- **Governor**
- **District State Senator**
- **District State Assemblymember**

- **Rights/restrictions regarding recycling, composting, littering, and other waste-related needs**
- **Rights/restrictions regarding hydrofracking**



LOCAL

- **Mayor**
- **District Attorney**
- **County Clerk**

GUNS

IDEAS TO CONSIDER

- **Firearms Owners' Protection Act:** provides protection for licensed firearms owners from unwarranted seizure of weapons
- **Child Safety Lock Act:** requires manufacturers to add safety locks on all weapons produced
- **National Instant Criminal Background Check System Improvements Amendments Act:** mandates deeper background checks and flagging of individuals with criminal history

- **Rights regarding state regulation of guns, including background checks, license requirements, waiting periods**

- **Gun presence and visibility at public schools by security guards, on-site police officers, and gun-licensed teachers**
- **Access to and/or requirement of classes/training on gun safety**



FEDERAL

- **President**
- **Vice President**
- **US Senator**
- **US Representative**



STATE

- **Governor**
- **District State Senator**
- **District State Assemblymember**
- **Attorney General**



LOCAL

- **Mayor**
- **District Attorney**
- **Sheriff**

HEALTH CARE

IDEAS TO CONSIDER

- **Affordable Care Act**
- **Emergency Medical Treatment and Active Labor Act:** medical providers must help a patient who is unable to pay when there is a medical emergency, including giving birth, until patient is stabilized
- **Mental Health Block Grants:** funding for states to expand their community mental health services

- **Medicaid:** state funded by taxes, covers basic healthcare costs and nursing home care for low-income families
- **Rights regarding privacy, abuse, and discrimination at medical facilities**
- **Funding for mental health systems, which funnel down to county and local levels**



FEDERAL

- **President**
- **Vice President**
- **US Senator**
- **US Representative**



STATE

- **Governor**
- **District State Senator**
- **District State Assemblymember**
- **Attorney General**

HOMELESSNESS

IDEAS TO CONSIDER

- **Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program**
- **Health Care for Homeless Program**
- **Runaway and Homeless Youth Program: provides shelter and guidance for youths**

- **Rights/restrictions regarding homeless residency in public spaces (sidewalks, parks, etc.)**
- **Funding for:**
 - **State-subsidized housing**
 - **Upkeep/building of shelters**

- **Funding for:**
 - **Local homeless shelters**
 - **Emergency shelters in extreme weather**
- **Rights/restrictions regarding homeless residency in public spaces (sidewalks, parks, etc.)**

There are 1,540 homeless people in New York's Capital Region.

FEDERAL

- **President**
- **Vice President**
- **US Senator**
- **US Representative**

STATE

- **Governor**
- **District State Senator**
- **District State Assemblymember**

LOCAL

- **Mayor**
- **Sheriff**
- **County Clerk**

IMMIGRATION

IDEAS TO CONSIDER

- **Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals:** offers two-year renewable deportation deferral for undocumented immigrants brought to the US as children, allowing time for work permit eligibility
- **Immigration and Nationality Act:** allows for deportation of immigrants, restrictions on immigration from “terror-prone” countries, and restrictions on asylum
- **Immigration Reform and Control Act:** restricts welfare benefits for undocumented immigrants and sanctions against employers who hire them

- **Rights regarding E-Verify requirements**
 - **E-verify, or employment eligibility,** requires a potential employee to be either a US citizen, a Legal Permanent Resident, or to hold a valid work visa
 - **Rights/restrictions regarding police ability to search houses and workplaces for undocumented immigrants without a warrant due to “probable cause”**



FEDERAL

- **President**
- **Vice President**
- **US Senator**
- **US Representative**



STATE

- **Governor**
- **District State Senator**
- **District State Assemblymember**
- **Attorney General**

INFRASTRUCTURE

IDEAS TO CONSIDER

- **Infrastructure Incentives Program:** encourages state, local, and private investment in infrastructure
- **Rural Infrastructure Program:** provides funding for rural infrastructure like roads, bridges, railways, investment in Tribal infrastructure
- **Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act:** provides funding for disaster mitigation and damage reduction, environmental and aquatic ecosystem restoration, and water treatment facilities

- **Funding for highways, rural infrastructure like country roads and bridges, and state bridge maintenance**

- **Funding for road maintenance, sign/light maintenance**
- **Funding for building and maintenance of bike lanes**



FEDERAL

- **President**
- **Vice President**
- **US Senator**
- **US Representative**

STATE

- **Governor**
- **District State Senator**
- **District State Assemblymember**

LOCAL

- **Mayor**
- **District Attorney**
- **Sheriff**
- **County Clerk**

LAW ENFORCEMENT

IDEAS TO CONSIDER

- **Violent Crime Control & Law Enforcement Act:** enables DOJ to step in when police engage in behavior that deprives people of constitutional rights
- **Collaborative Reform Initiative Technical Assistance Center (CRI-TAC) in Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS):** undertakes assessments, recommends & assists implementing reform
- **Justice in Policing Act of 2020 (proposed June 2020):** ensures structural change & increases department accountability
- **Distribution of excess military equipment to the police**

- **Use-of-force and use-of firearms policies**
- **Use of body and dashboard cameras**
- **Police funding**

- **Neighborhood watch and community-based groups**
- **Police training**
- **Police funding**



FEDERAL

- **President**
- **Vice President**
- **US Senator**
- **US Representative**

STATE

- **Governor**
- **District State Senator**
- **District State Assemblymember**
- **Attorney General**

LOCAL

- **Mayor**
- **District Attorney**
- **Sheriff**

NATIVE RIGHTS

IDEAS TO CONSIDER

- **Indian Reorganization Act:** reverses traditional model of assimilation and encourages protecting and strengthening traditions and culture
- **Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act:** requires the return of Native American “cultural items” to culturally affiliated tribes by federally funded institutions
- **American Indian Religious Freedom Act:** protects and preserves Native people’s right of freedom to believe, express, exercise their traditional religious/cultural rights and practices

- **Rights/restrictions regarding Native nations’ ability to prosecute non-Natives who committed crimes on reservations**
- **Rights regarding land/environmental concerns**
- **Gaming laws: rights/restrictions regarding casinos on Native American land**

- **Rights regarding protection from discrimination by local police force and other organizations**
- **Rights regarding hunting and trespassing on reservations**



FEDERAL

- **President**
- **Vice President**
- **US Senator**
- **US Representative**

STATE

- **Governor**
- **District State Senator**
- **District State Assemblymember**
- **Attorney General**

LOCAL

- **Mayor**
- **District Attorney**

PARKS

IDEAS TO CONSIDER

- **Endangered Species Act**
- **National Park System Resource Protection Act**
- **Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965**

- **Rights/restrictions regarding permits for camping, advertising, aviation, and hunting in state parks**
- **Funding for state parks**

- **Rights/restrictions regarding littering, pollution, and damage in local parks; animal allowance in local parks**
- **Funding for local parks**



FEDERAL

- **President**
- **Vice President**
- **US Senator**
- **US Representative**



STATE

- **Governor**
- **District State Senator**
- **District State Assemblymember**
- **Attorney General**



LOCAL

- **Mayor**
- **District Attorney**
- **Sheriff**
- **County Clerk**

PRISONS

IDEAS TO CONSIDER

- **Eighth Amendment:** grants freedom from “cruel and unusual” punishment, and access to “adequate” medical and mental health care for inmates
- **Civil Rights of Institutionalized Persons Act:** freedom from discrimination, harassment, abuse, and exploitation
- **Rights regarding non-violent imprisonment:** reevaluation of sentencing, definition of felonies, etc.
- **Affordability/necessity of bail for non-violent, low-risk people**

- **Funding for reentry nonprofit organizations and “home plans” or “reentry plans”**
- **Death penalty**
- **Rights regarding penal labor, including wage increases/decreases, work safety, ability of state to use penal laborers for emergencies like hurricane cleanup and snow removal**

- **Funding for prison maintenance**
- **Funding for in-prison education, reentry programs, job training**

In New York State, regular prison job assignments pay 10-26 cents per hour, and imprisoned persons work 6 hours per day.



FEDERAL

- **President**
- **Vice President**
- **US Senator**
- **US Representative**

STATE

- **Governor**
- **District State Senator**
- **District State Assemblymember**
- **Attorney General**

LOCAL

- **Mayor**
- **District Attorney**
- **Sheriff**
- **County Clerk**

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

IDEAS TO CONSIDER

- ***Roe vs. Wade***: granted right to access legal and safe abortion services
- ***Griswold vs. Connecticut***: determined that state bans on contraceptives violate the right to marital privacy
- **Affordable Care Act**: grants coverage of contraceptives, prescriptions, and hormones by employer-provided health insurance policies.

- Rights regarding employer-provided insurance coverage of necessary prescriptions, including birth control and hormones
- Funding for Planned Parenthood

- Funding for local Planned Parenthood offices
- Rights regarding minors' access to birth control, abortion, and hormones



FEDERAL

- President
- Vice President
- US Senator
- US Representative



STATE

- Governor
- District State Senator
- District State Assemblymember
- Attorney General



LOCAL

- Mayor
- District Attorney

TAXES

IDEAS TO CONSIDER

- **Tax Cut and Jobs Act:**
 - **Reduces tax rates for businesses and individuals**
 - **Increases standard deduction, deductions for state and local income taxes and property taxes and limited mortgage interest deduction**
 - **Reduces number of estates impacted by estate tax**

- **Cost and use of taxes accrued from income, property, estates**

- **Rights regarding proportion of property tax paid and how it's used**



FEDERAL

- **President**
- **Vice President**
- **US Senator**
- **US Representative**



STATE

- **Governor**
- **District State Senator**
- **District State Assemblymember**



LOCAL

- **Mayor**
- **District Attorney**
- **County Clerk**

This booklet was originally compiled for a postcard-writing project in conjunction with the 2018 exhibition *Give a damn.*, curated by Rebecca McNamara. It has been updated with new pages and accompanying stationery for a summer 2020 letter-writing initiative.

**Give a
damn.**