

Extension Bulletin E-1371

Public Affairs Education for Families

What Is Public Affairs Education?

How Does Government Policy Affect Families?

How Can Families Affect Public Policies?

How Does Cooperative Extension Help?

*Extension Resources to Help Understand the
Political Process and How to Get Involved*

Family Living Education

Family Living Education
Cooperative Extension Service
Michigan State University

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Public Affairs Education for Families

What Is Public Affairs Education?

The actions of local, state, and federal government significantly affect the lives of families in Michigan. The quality of government is dependent on the intelligent participation of citizens. The Cooperative Extension Service has a long history of involvement with programs in public affairs education. Through its function of non-formal education, it has the resources to increase families' understanding of public issues and to educate for greater citizen participation.

How Does Government Policy Affect Families?

Government policy affects families in three general areas:

- State and federal legislation in such matters as nutrition, housing, social services, education, consumer rights, land use, energy, and transportation.
- Development of rules and regulations to administer the legislation.
- Policies and practices and the delivery of government services.

How Can Families Affect Public Policies?

Families can have an impact on public policy in the following ways:

- Understanding current issues.
- Learning to evaluate the costs of government services versus the benefits of those services.
- Understanding how government works.
- Learning that the opinions of families are important to public officials.

How Does Cooperative Extension Help?

The Cooperative Extension Service offers the following types of educational programs and projects:

- Provides information on government policies and new and pending legislation via newsletters, pamphlets, newspaper articles, radio and television about current policy issues.
- Provides information on the history and organization of local and state government.
- Promotes an understanding of government services and agencies.

- Helps citizens know where they can get information and how they can contact their government officials.
- Organizes tours of government agencies and programs.
- Arranges meetings and social events that give citizens a chance to talk with their elected officials.
- Sponsors public meetings to allow discussion of controversial issues, explanations of ballot issues, or new legislation.
- Carries out public affairs programming through 4-H, Agriculture and Marketing, Natural Resources/Public Policy, and Family Living Education.

Extension Resources that Help Citizens Understand the Political Process and How to Get Involved

"We The People" — A slide/tape presentation examining in one program the history and structure of local government, and in the second, exploring the methods of citizen involvement in a local issue.

"Public Office in Our County" — A set of program materials available for classes or meetings. This unit explains the duties and responsibilities of village, township, city, school, and county officials.

"Make Your Voice Heard" — A citizen's guide to effective participation in public hearings.

"Planning a Meeting on Controversial Issues" — A pamphlet giving detailed assistance to groups or individuals in setting up a public meeting.

For further information about these programs, contact your County Extension Office.

Family Living Education

The Cooperative Extension Service is an arm of Michigan State University's total education program. Its aim is to meet the educational needs of the people. It is jointly financed by federal, state, and county governments.

The Family Living Education program in the Cooperative Extension Service recognizes families as the fundamental unit of society. A basic goal is to help all families develop in ways beneficial to themselves, to their communities, to Michigan and society. Eighty Extension Home Economists in all 83 counties work with families to provide information to help them cope with everyday concerns and problems.