



# THE PLEDGE KIT

Helping you make a difference!

## OVERVIEW

Dear fellow American,

I founded **Americans for Decency in Government** (ADG), a nonpartisan nonprofit, because I was frustrated by how today's extreme political polarization is damaging our families, our friends, our communities, and our democracy.

An important piece of the solution is addressing how public officials treat others, especially those with whom they disagree. We believe a minimum standard for seeking and holding public office should be striving to treat everyone with basic human decency (e.g., respect, honesty, honor). ADG exists to help everyday Americans make a difference by putting that standard back into the conversation about who holds office.

Officials often respond more positively to someone they serve than to an organization. That's where your power comes in. This kit helps you make a difference by asking your local, state, and federal public officials to sign the **Patriot's Pledge**, a nonpartisan commitment to strive for basic human decency in public service.

When you make that ask, you join a growing number of Americans who are tired of division and gridlock and have decided to do something about it.

Thank you for taking action!



*Michael Cannon*

Michael Cannon

Founder, Americans for Decency in Government

[info@decencyingov.org](mailto:info@decencyingov.org)

[www.decencyingov.org](http://www.decencyingov.org)

# **ASKING PUBLIC OFFICIALS TO SIGN - FOUR SIMPLE STEPS**

## **1. Choose who to ask.**

- a. Possibilities include mayors, town council members, county commissioners, school board members, your representatives in the state legislature, your congressperson or senators, or any public official you think should be asked to sign.
- b. The more basic human decency, the better, so its great if you ask multiple officials in multiple parties. This is about how public officials conduct themselves, not about their party, policy positions, religion, or ideology.

## **2. Find their contact information.**

- a. Town, city, or county websites usually list officials' email addresses.
- b. For state legislators, congresspeople, or senators, search the web using "find my state legislator", "find my senator", "find my congressional representative", etc.

## **3. Send the pledge.**

- a. Pick the best option from the next section (email, in person, etc.)
- b. If emailing the pledge, attach the two page pdf file containing the Pledge Introduction and Pledge and include [pledge@decencyingov.org](mailto:pledge@decencyingov.org) on copy (cc).

## **4. Thank them for signing.**

- a. If the public official signs, thank them in person or by email
- b. If you've heard nothing after two weeks, send one brief follow-up.
- c. If you still hear nothing, leave it there.

## **OPTIONS FOR ASKING**

Sample Content. Feel free to modify and personalize as desired.

### **OPTION A: EMAIL**

**Easiest, works everywhere, lowest response rate.**

**Subject:** A request from a resident of [Your Town]

**Cc:** [pledge@decencyingov.org](mailto:pledge@decencyingov.org)

**Dear** [Public officials title and name (e.g., Mayor Smith)]

My name is [Your Name] and I live in [Your Town]. Thank you for your service. I know the work you do for our town is difficult and often goes unrecognized.

As a citizen, I've grown increasingly frustrated with political divisiveness and government gridlock and I'm writing with one request. I'd like you to commit to acting with basic human decency (e.g. respect, honesty, honor) as defined in the attached one-page **Patriot's Pledge**, from a nonpartisan nonprofit called Americans for Decency in Government ([www.decencyingov.org](http://www.decencyingov.org)).

The pledge is *voluntary and does not ask you to take specific policy positions or belong to a specific party, or have a specific ideology. Nor does it ask that you be perfect.*

If you read it and agree with it, I'd be grateful if you'd sign it and email it back to me, copying [pledge@decencyingov.org](mailto:pledge@decencyingov.org). We need public servants who are willing to stand up for and commit to basic human decency. If you don't feel comfortable signing the pledge, I understand, just please let me know what is keeping you from signing.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Your Address or Neighborhood]

---

## OPTION B: IN PERSON AT A PUBLIC MEETING

Council, commission, and school board meetings usually have time before or after for informal conversation. This works better than email because the official can put a face to the request.

"Hi, I'm [Name], I live over [on Street or in Neighborhood]. I wanted to thank you for serving. I know it's a lot of work.

Can I ask you about one thing? I'm really concerned about the tone of our politics today and how government officials conduct themselves.

There's a nonpartisan group called Americans for Decency in Government, and they've written a one-page pledge about how public officials treat people with respect, honesty, and putting constituents first. Nothing about policy, party, or ideology.

I really think we need public officials willing to stand up for civil conduct and decency in office. Would you be open to reading it? If you agree with it, you could sign it. If not, no hard feelings. Can I email it to you? If you are not comfortable signing it, I'd appreciate knowing why."

If they ask what it's for: "Like me, Americans for Decency in Government is working toward more effective trustworthy government and reducing the political polarization damaging the country."

---

## Option C. Request a short meeting.

Local officials often say yes to fifteen minutes with a resident. Ask for the meeting first, then make the request in person using the Option B script above.

---

## Option D. During public comment.

Most governing bodies, like town and city councils, county commissions, and school boards, set aside time at each regular meeting when any resident may address the body for a few minutes, whether or not the topic is on the agenda.

It's usually called "public comment," "public forum," or "citizen input." Meeting agendas posted on your local government's website will show when it happens. Some require you to sign up beforehand.

Use this option only if you're comfortable speaking. Keep it under a minute, address the whole body rather than one member, and stay positive. Never use public comment to criticize a specific official.

*"Good evening. My name is [Name] and I live in [Town]. I'm not here about anything on tonight's agenda.*

*I'd like to bring something to the board's attention. Many of us are concerned with the deep political polarization across the country and even right here in [Town]. It's affecting the ability for government to get things done and it's damaging our democracy, our communities, and in some cases even our families.*

*There's an idea that if public officials like you are willing to stand up and commit to treating one another and all of us with basic human decency, some of this division and gridlock could be eased. In fact there's a Patriot's Pledge of Basic Human Decency, from a nonpartisan group called Americans for Decency in Government. It's a one-page voluntary commitment to treat people with respect, be honest, and put the public first. It has nothing to do with your party, policy positions, religion, or ideology.*

*I'll be sending it to each of you. I hope you'll take a look, and I'd be grateful if you'd consider signing. We need public servants who are willing to stand up for and commit to basic human decency, but if it's not for you, I understand, and would just ask you to let me know why you can't sign.*

*Thank you for your service."*



# Americans for Decency in Government

## Introduction to the Patriots Pledge

[www.decencyingov.org](http://www.decencyingov.org)

---

### ADG's Vision

More effective, trustworthy government at every level, and a public less divided by politics.

### ADG Believes That When Officials Act With Decency:

- Government effectiveness and public trust in government increase.
- Unhealthy partisan divisions decrease.

### The Patriot's Pledge

- Is a voluntary commitment to make a good-faith effort to act with honor, respect, and integrity.
- Is not about party, ideology, or the positions officials take, only how they strive to serve.

### The Value of Signing

- **Meets your constituents where they are.** Across the political spectrum, people are hungry for leaders who will lower the temperature and focus on solving problems instead of stoking conflict. The Pledge lets you answer that hope directly. Signing tells constituents you understand what they actually want from government and are willing to commit to it in public, giving people something to vote for rather than against.
- **Separates you from the politics fueling public distrust.** Much of today's political behavior, the insults, the bad faith, the treating opponents as enemies, has left voters exhausted and distrustful. The Pledge is a clear, public break from that pattern. Your signature draws a visible line between you and the conduct constituents regularly see, and that contrast is often what earns a second look from independents and skeptics.
- **Earns a credential you can point to.** Your signature becomes part of a public record you can cite in campaign materials, on your website, and at re-election time. When voters are deciding whom to trust, a concrete commitment they can look up carries more weight than a promise made on the trail.
- **Sets the tone for those around you.** Signing is not only a personal commitment; it is a signal to your colleagues, staff, and community about the kind of conduct you expect and model. Officials who sign tend to be remembered as the ones who raised the bar, and that example can shape how a council, a delegation, or a whole town, county or state conducts itself. Leadership of that kind is its own form of influence.
- **Carries little political risk.** The Pledge asks only for a good-faith effort to treat people decently and govern honestly, standards most constituents already expect of you. It commits you to no ideology, no bill, and no policy position, so there is no political ground to defend by signing. There is little to nothing to lose, and real goodwill to gain.

*The leaders people follow are the ones who stand for something. Sign the Pledge and be one of them.*



# Patriot's Pledge of Basic Human Decency

*As a public official, I acknowledge that for our government to be most effective and for our country to thrive, those entrusted with public power must strive to act and speak with basic human decency. I recognize that basic human decency is a civic responsibility that transcends political party, ideology, and personal ambition.*

***I will strive to consistently meet the following standards:***

- ***Respect for All:*** *I will treat every person, including political opponents, with respect and dignity, regardless of their economic or social status, political party, religious affiliation or ideological beliefs. I will avoid rhetoric and conduct that demeans, dehumanizes, or needlessly inflames.*
- ***Integrity & Honesty:*** *I will be truthful and honor my commitments. I will to the best of my ability, support and defend the impartial application of the laws of the United States and will endeavor to avoid making decisions that are arbitrary or capricious.*
- ***Honor:*** *I will prioritize identifying and solving problems to improve the lives of my constituents. I will weigh the institutional and human impacts of my actions and will seek to avoid partisan obstruction that does not serve the public interest. I will not knowingly mistreat, exploit, or neglect the people I serve.*
- ***Humility & Accountability:*** *I commit to giving credit where credit is due, owning my mistakes, attempting to remedy any harm caused, and pursuing continuous improvement in my public conduct.*
- ***Responsible Affiliation:*** *I will exercise reasonable judgment to avoid unnecessary alignment with individuals or organizations whose conduct consistently violates the principles of basic human decency described above.*

*I pledge a sincere, good-faith effort to model these values in my public service in order to strengthen trust, improve the functioning of government, and support the health of our democracy.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Office Held

\_\_\_\_\_  
City, State

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**AFTER SIGNING:** Email signed pledge to [pledge@decencyingov.org](mailto:pledge@decencyingov.org) and the person who asked you to sign.