

# PARTICIPATORY REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY

## WHAT IS IT?

Democracy comes from the ancient Greek meaning rule by the people. Throughout history, in communities across the world, people gather regularly to debate and discuss important issues that impact them. Together they decide on the best course of action and put someone in charge of implementing their decision. This is direct **participatory democracy**.

Today, in states and countries with millions of people, this sort of direct governance is impossible. In the U.S., for example, every elected official in the U.S. House of Representatives serves between 700,000 and 750,000 people. It's unreasonable to have hundreds of thousands of people at a meeting to discuss and vote on every issue. Instead, communities elect a leader to represent them. This is **representative democracy**.

This is why we advocate through a system of participatory representative democracy. It enable us to take direct action through our elected official.

## MAKING YOUR VOICE HEARD

**How can you contribute to your community's well-being?**

- \* **Talk with your neighbors and friends.** Understand their problems, talk about your concerns and then work together to formulate a plan to make improvements where you have mutual concerns.
- \* **Meet with organizations** that can help you address your issue or concern. This may be a local civic association, a homeowner's association, a condominium board, or local government representative. It may also be with your Member of Congress or your Senator.
- \* **Actively listen** when people offer potential solutions or changes that they want to see and decide whether that will work for you or whether a compromise or hybrid solution would work.
- \* **Reach out to your elected representatives** to make sure they're aware of community interests and concerns. You can do this as a single constituent, or you can form an advocacy group to bring greater power to your voice.
- \* **Engage your community members** by having people write, call, or meet with your elected officials. Writing letters to your local newspaper is also very effective.

## MEASURING CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Election officials and the media help us monitor participation by measuring voter turnout. But we can also track *proposed* bills in our local and state legislatures. Just like big businesses and lobbying groups, community groups can meet with decision-makers to get the legislation we want to balance and preserve what we value in our communities. EDA has resources to help you find out what's happening in your state legislature. On our website, we track legislation and identify bills that will affect our food, water and energy.

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**EDA** Economic  
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