COLLECTION II — CIVIC PARTICIPATION & VOTING

How to Submit a Public Comment

Step-by-step guide to participating in public comment periods for proposed legislation and regulations.

By Daniel P. Devine · Civest Sphere · November 2026

What public comment is

Before many laws, regulations and local projects are finalized, the government must invite public comment. Agencies are required to read and consider the comments they receive, and substantive comments can change the final rule.

Where comment periods happen

- **Federal regulations:** proposed rules are published in the Federal Register, and you can comment at regulations.gov. Comment periods often run 30 to 60 days.
- **New York State regulations:** proposed rules are published in the weekly *State Register*. Most have a public comment period of at least 60 days.
- **Local decisions:** zoning changes, budgets, environmental reviews and major projects usually have a public hearing and a written comment period. Check town, county and school district websites and legal notices.

How to write an effective comment

1. **Identify the proposal.** Include the docket number, rule number, bill number or project name.
2. **Say who you are** and why it affects you: as a resident, parent, business owner or worker.
3. **Be specific.** Point to the exact section you support or oppose.

4. **Explain why,** with facts, data or personal experience. One concrete example beats a page of general opinion.
5. **Propose a solution.** Suggest wording changes or alternatives.
6. **Keep it focused.** One clear page is often more effective than ten.

Tips

- Original comments carry more weight than identical form letters.
- Submit before the deadline. Late comments may not be considered.
- Keep a copy and any confirmation number.
- Comments are usually public, so don't include private information you don't want published.

After you comment

For federal and state rules, the agency must respond to significant comments when it publishes the final rule. Check back to see how your issue was addressed.

> OFFICIAL SOURCES
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> - Regulations.gov (https://www.regulations.gov)
> - NY Department of State — State Register (https://dos.ny.gov/state-register)

Last reviewed November 2026. This guide is general information, not legal advice. Laws, deadlines and procedures change, so confirm details with the official source before you act.

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