

OPINIONS

## Here's the antidote for political stress

by Char Griffin  
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Psychologists often note that “political stress” stems from a lack of agency—the feeling that things are happening to us rather than with our consent.



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This leads to burnout and a desire to disengage. However, research into civic engagement suggests a powerful antidote: Active Participation. When we transition from passive consumers of news to active participants in the process, our perspective shifts. Taking a concrete, positive action doesn't just help the cause; it helps you.

- **It reduces “Doomscrolling”:** Instead of endlessly absorbing negative news, you are channeling that energy into a specific task.
- **It builds Efficacy:** Seeing your name on a letter to a Senator reminds you that you are a constituent with a voice, not just an observer.
- **It fosters Connection:** Knowing you are working to make your community better creates a sense of solidarity.

You might wonder: “Does one more letter really matter?” The answer, according to legislative staffers, is a resounding yes. While lobbyists have their place, elected officials are ultimately accountable to their voters. When an office receives a surge of personal letters on a specific bill, it moves that issue to the top of the pile. It signals that their “bosses”—the people back home—are watching.

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