

NAVIGATING GOVERNMENT IN NYC

Created for NYC Faith Sector Climate Adaptation Working Group on 04.24.25

QUESTIONS FOR TODAY

- How can we use our positions to influence policy?
- How do I know what level of government I should go to?
- How can we wield our combined power to influence policy, practices, and land use?

GOVERNMENT WORKS FOR US

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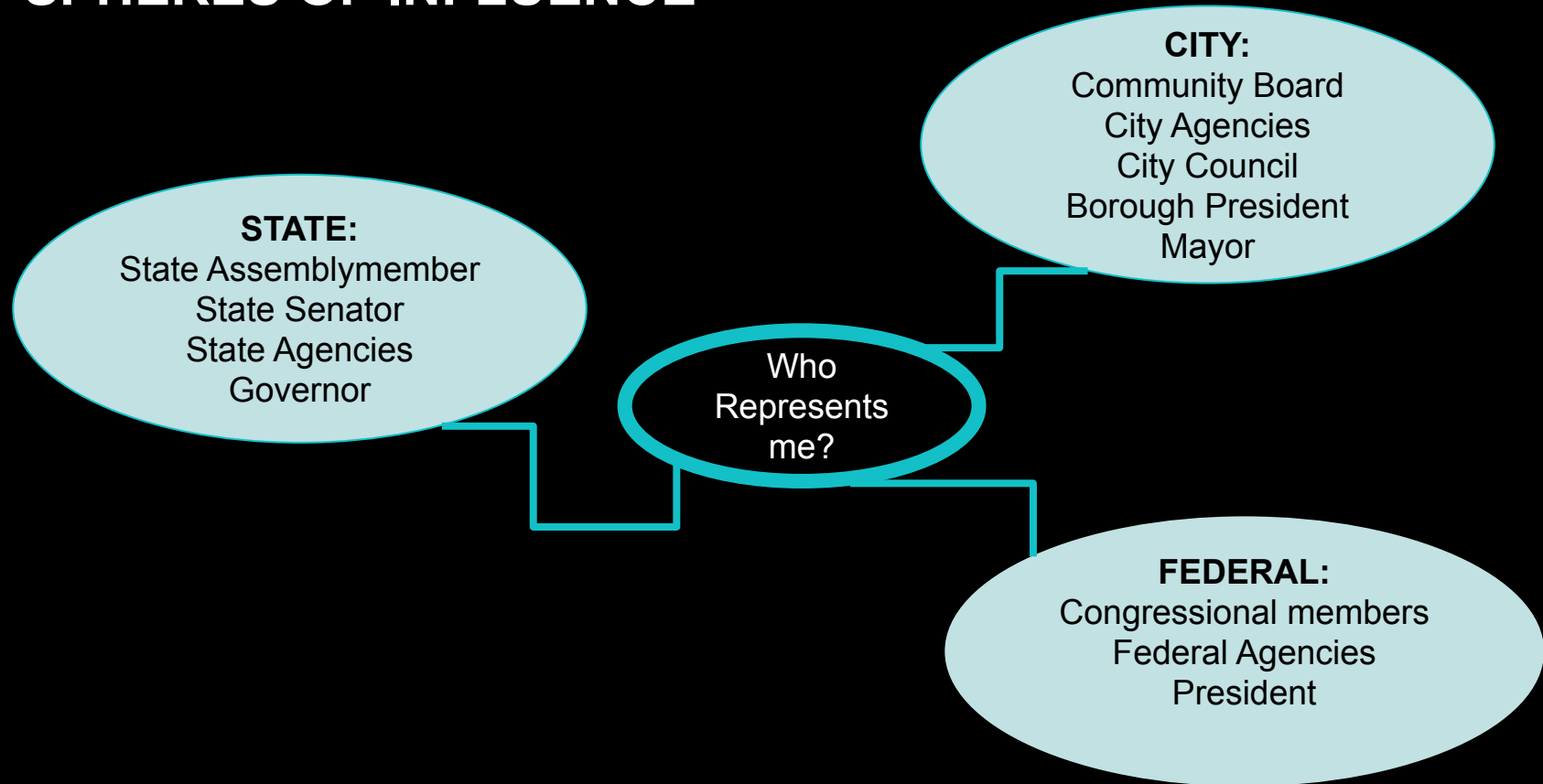
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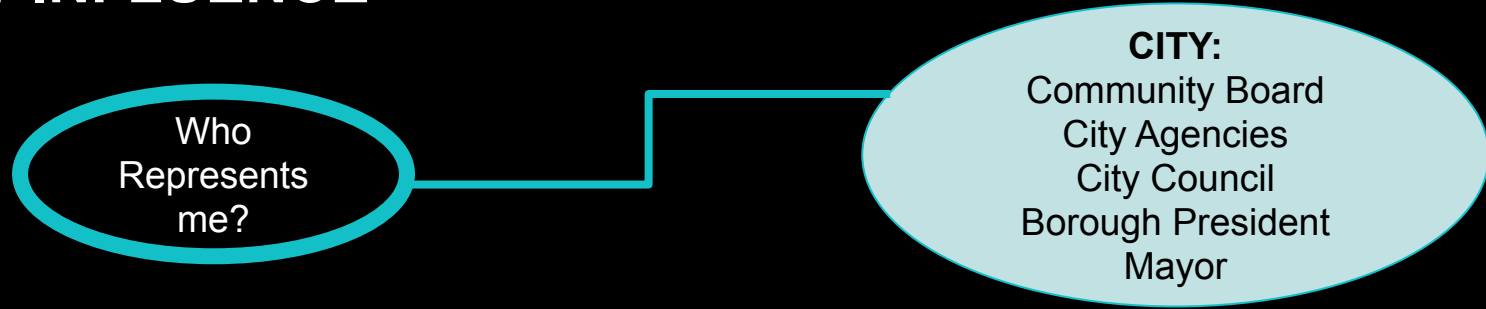
SPHERES OF INFLUENCE



CITY ACTORS

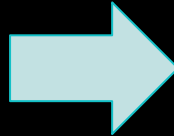
- **COMMUNITY BOARDS**
 - Give advisory votes on land use changes (ULURP)
- **BOROUGH PRESIDENT**
 - Is a formal step in the land use review process
 - Has a relatively small budget that supports mostly capital projects
- **CITY COUNCIL**
 - Determine land use
 - Agrees with the Mayor on fiscal spending
 - Determine local policies
 - The Speaker of the City Council has enormous power and sway with other members and the Mayor
- **CITY AGENCIES**
 - Provide critical services such as sanitation, water delivery, transportation, parks, etc. and oversee major capital projects such as new schools, roads, etc.
- **MAYOR**
 - Sets the agenda for NYC and determines most policy issues
 - Leads agencies
 - Negotiates budget with the City Council
 - Responsible for Emergency Management

CITY INFLUENCE



How to get involved:

- Attend community board meetings/ask to join your community board
- Watch a Council Hearing/Sign up for their calendars/Give or submit testimony
- Ask the City Council or Borough President for funding to upgrade a city-owned site (park, school, etc)
- Invite Commissioners to see the challenges in your neighborhood



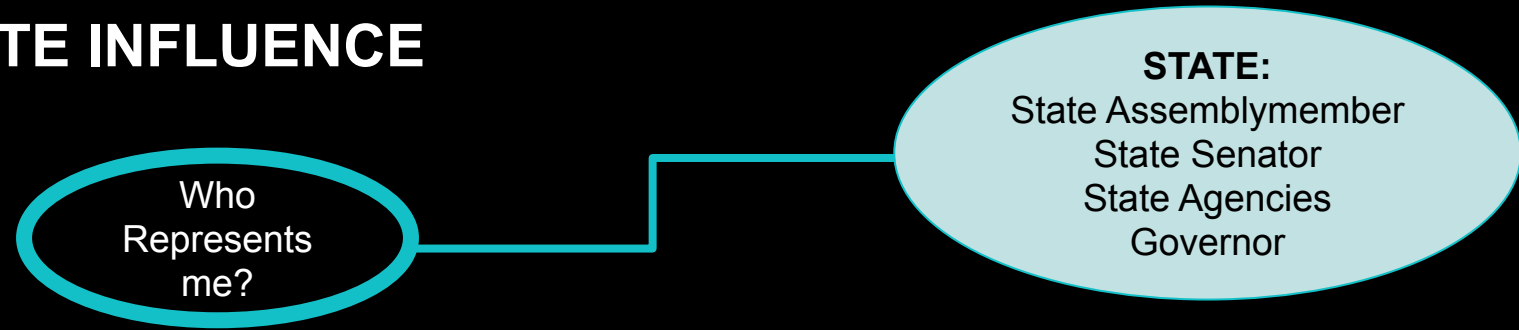
Important players on climate policy:

- Office of Emergency Management
- Office of Climate and Environmental Justice
- Department of Environmental Protection
- Parks and Recreation
- Etc

STATE ACTORS

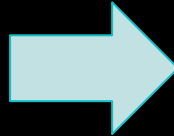
- **STATE SENATOR AND STATE ASSEMBLY MEMBERS**
 - Represent the two houses of government
 - Pass legislation
 - Negotiate the state budget
 - The Assembly Speaker and Senate Majority Leader hold power
 - Must approve raising taxes and other issues for NYC
- **STATE AGENCIES**
 - Carry out the directives of the Governor and passed policy initiatives
 - Heads are appointed by the Governor
- **GOVERNOR**
 - Sets the agenda for the State
 - Holds budget power
 - Holds political influence nationally

STATE INFLUENCE



How to get involved:

- Get to know your legislators
- Make agency requests
- Invite your electeds to join your meetings and/or services
- As a group, leverage power: ask for briefings, create a tour, etc.



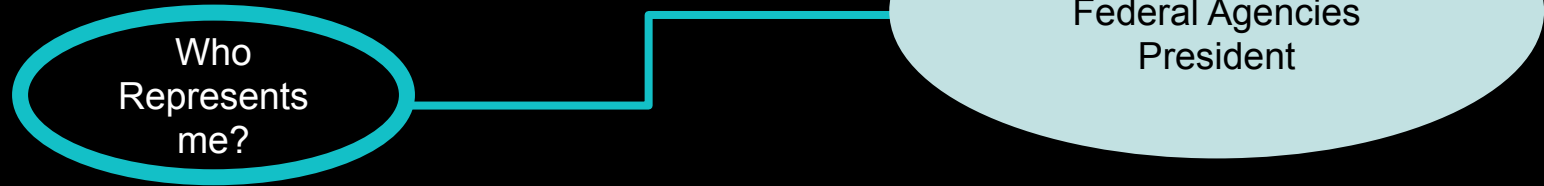
Important players on climate policy:

- Deputy Secretary for the Environment (Governor's office)
- Chief Resilience Officer at Department of Environmental Protection
- NYSERDA
- Department of State
- State Assembly and Senate for Budget

FEDERAL ACTORS

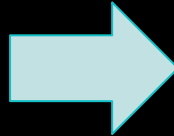
- **US SENATOR**
 - Two per state
 - Sits in the "upper house" of government
 - Confirms presidential appointees, approves budget, passes national policy
- **CONGRESSIONAL REPRESENTATIVES**
 - 26 members in NYS
 - Pass legislation
 - With senators, counterbalance to the President
- **FEDERAL AGENCIES**
 - Sets U.S. policy/oversight on immigration, energy, agriculture, health care, etc.
- **PRESIDENT**
 - Sets federal agenda
 - Represents the U.S. to the world

FEDERAL INFLUENCE



How to get involved:

- Voice your opinions to your elected officials
- Leverage the media to give examples of how federal acts will affect your community



Important players on climate policy:

- FEMA (disaster response)
- HUD (flexible spending after disasters)
- Department of Energy (regulate carbon)
- Environmental Protection Agency (clean water, clean air)
- NOAA (national weather service, data)
- Army Corp of Engineers (major capital projects on shorelines)

HOW TO INFLUENCE (WITHOUT LOBBYING)

- Use the collective voice of organized neighborhood leaders to leverage power.
 - Host monthly/bimonthly meet ups for other faith leaders and community organizations
 - Engage with existing networks or coalitions
- Educate, educate, educate
 - Invite elected officials to your houses of worship and community events
 - Bring electeds to tour your neighborhoods
 - Make sure they hear directly from constituents
- Leverage the press
 - Build a relationship with local reporters
 - Call them when you have something they should know
- Vote, and make sure your neighbors do too



HOW HAVE YOU INFLUENCED THE GOVERNMENT?