Is government dysfunctional? Can change come through the legislative process? Brandeis University namesake Louis D. Brandeis suggested that the states can be “laboratories of democracy.” ENACT: The Educational Network for Active Civic Transformation, a new national program based at Brandeis, takes inspiration in part from that idea.

ENACT is becoming a major voice in addressing challenges to American democracy by engaging young people around the country in state-level legislative change based on a shared commitment to knowledge, cooperation, justice and integrity.

At the core of ENACT are courses taught at colleges and universities across the country, supported by a national in-person and online network connecting the faculty and staff in those courses with each other. Students learn through direct engagement in the work of advancing legislation: researching the issues being debated, meeting with community organizations, and traveling to the state capital to meet with legislators.

Participating schools represent a diverse range of higher education institutions. They are linked through an online network that enhances student learning, connects them with people active in the field, and provides an opportunity for ENACT faculty and students to inspire and instruct others who are committed to engaging in effective, ethical state-level legislative change.

**The ENACT Model**

- **Workshop:** Under the leadership of the program’s academic director, ENACT Fellows meet in person to share ideas and work on course development. In-person and virtual meetings continue on an ongoing basis.

- **Courses:** In ENACT courses students learn about the legislative process at the state level, with a substantial hands-on component in which they engage directly in that process.

- **Online Network:** The ENACT Network is a national in-person and online network of students, faculty, activists and legislators, with a focus on the first 29 ENACT states. It is a strategic and information hub for students, ENACT Faculty Fellows, and other state-level players that enables them to connect with counterparts throughout the country.

“The most important office, and the one which all of us can and should fill, is that of private citizen.” – Louis D. Brandeis

Students in Brandeis University’s ENACT course meet at the Massachusetts State House with Representative Byron Rushing.
2018 highlights

- Thirteen ENACT Faculty Fellows join the network, expanding ENACT to a total of 29 colleges and universities each in a different state across the United States, and including public and private institutions, religiously-affiliated institutions, historically black colleges and universities, and a military academy.
- ENACT students engage with the state legislative process for active bills concerning a wide range of policy areas, including education, energy, the environment, healthcare, and immigration. They research the issues, visit their state capitols, and meet with current and former legislators and leaders of community organizations.
- Nearly 300 students, alumni and faculty join the ever-growing ENACT online community. ENACT faculty share materials and advice. Students discuss policy and strategy with each other, and consult with alumni of ENACT courses. Nearly 150 documents and resources are accessible to students and faculty, including course syllabi, work by fellow ENACT students, articles on the pedagogy of experiential learning, political science research, and more.

Selected resources

- The national online ENACT Network, connecting students, alumni, faculty, legislators and community members. They are able to share tools and strategies for state-level legislative engagement, as well as reflections, ideas and analysis, with other individuals and organizations with shared interests.
- Anthologies of student work from nine years of the Brandeis University ENACT course.

How to connect

- Join our mailing list for news and updates: email request to ENACT@brandeis.edu
- Follow us on Twitter: @ENACTnational
- Visit go.brandeis.edu/ENACT

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The International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life develops effective responses to conflict and injustice by offering innovative approaches to coexistence, strengthening the work of international courts, and encouraging ethical practice in civic and professional life.

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