

Contact Your Legislator

Telephoning your legislator

- Prepare before you call. Organization will make your call more effective.
- Make a list of the key points you wish to make during your call.
- Review your facts, including any available resource materials.

Making the call

- When the legislature is in session, call the capitol office, during recess and on Fridays, call the district office.
- Ask to speak directly to the legislator, if he/she is not available, ask to speak to the administrative assistant or legal aid.
- When the legislator or his/her assistant is on the line, give your name, where in the district you live, and any other pertinent information.
- State the reason for your call. Use bill numbers when appropriate.
- Discuss only one issue per telephone call.
- Following the key points you prepared before your call, briefly state your position and explain what action you wish the legislator to take.
- If the legislator is undecided, offer to furnish information which relates to your views and then follow through and furnish it.
- If the legislator supports your position, express your appreciation and thanks.
- If the legislator opposes your position, do not argue or be antagonistic. Do request he/she give your view further consideration.
- Right before a vote on a hotly debated issue, the person answering the telephone may only be able to record whether you are for or against the bill.

Writing to your legislator

Personal letters outlining key points of an issue are an effective tool when communicating with legislators. Letters should be brief and to the point. Letters are the main source used by legislators to assess their constituencies' views.

Basic guidelines for writing:

- Identify yourself in the first paragraph. If you are writing as a constituent, a president of an organization, or a chairperson of an association, indicate this.
- Identify your reason for writing in the first paragraph. State your position on the legislation and include a bill number whenever possible.
- Write on personal stationary or on plain paper.
- Use facts, but don't overload the letter with them. Facts tend to validate a letter and illustrate that thought has been given to the position.
- Include your return address on the letter.
- Keep it short. Write the letter about one issue. If there is more than one issue of concern, write more than one letter.
- Ask for a reply. Indicate that a reply including the legislator's position on the issue would be appreciated.

When referring to a member of the federal or state government, it is appropriate to address the envelope "The Honorable John Doe." In the letter you may say Representative, Senator, Congresswoman etc.

Outline of an Effective Letter:

The Honorable (First and Last name)
Address

Re: Topic, Including bill number if available

Dear (Senator or Representative):

Who you are:

- a. Constituent
- b. Relationship to bill – i. e. physician, patient, taxpayer
- c. General issue of concern

II. Issue of Concern

- a. site bill number and title if possible
- b. Portion of the bill you support or oppose
- c. How the legislation will directly affect you if possible

III. Action

1. Vote for or against
2. Offer an alternative if possible

Sincerely,

Your Name