



Getting Your Voice Heard Letters and Phone Calls

Effective Letter Writing techniques

Writing a personal, hand-written letter is in many instances the most effective way to let legislators know what you think about specific issues. Officials do read mail from their constituents.

The following are some pointers for sending letters to legislators:

- Make sure to address your correspondence to legislators correctly. All members of Congress and the General Assembly, as well as the Governor and President, may be addressed as "The Honorable First Name, Last Name," followed by their address. Senators, both state and US, are addressed as "Dear Senator Last Name." Representatives, both state and US, are addressed as "Dear Representative Last Name."
- *First paragraph* - state who you are and where you live. Make sure to include any credentials or firsthand experience that would make you particularly credible on a particular issue.
- *Second paragraph* - describe the issue as clearly and concisely as possible. Tie the issue to the larger needs of the community. Make long-term benefits to large groups of people known.
- *Third paragraph* - state the action you would like to see the legislator take on behalf of your issue.
- Close the letter by thanking the legislator for his/her time. Ask for a response letter stating the legislator's position. Make sure to include your first and last name, street address, phone number with area code, and email address.

Effective Telephoning Techniques

Phone calls are an easy way to let legislators know what you think. The effectiveness of a phone call varies from legislator to legislator. In general, they are not as effective as letters, but are important when time is a major factor. Keep in mind you most likely will be talking to a staff member.

The following are some pointers for making phone calls to legislators:

- Clearly state your name and where you live.
- Be prepared to make your point in several sentences.
- Ask for a response that includes the legislator's position.
- Be sure to thank the staff member for his/her time. Follow up your conversation in writing.

(Adapted from the New Public Policy for Children and Families: The intersection of the Government, Philanthropy, Business, and Non-Profit Sectors; June 2, 2000)