

Tips for Calling Your Legislator

Plan: Before you make the call, plan what you are going to say. Your phone call will be very brief, so keep your message simple and to-the-point. Take a moment to think about it—you might even want to make some notes—and you'll find that your call goes more smoothly than if you were to call "off the cuff." Research the #/ name of the specific bill about which you are calling.

Message: After identifying (and writing down) your request, think about a key point or personal story that supports your position.

Call: Make the call. If your legislator is in your home district on specific days or on weekends, call them when they are in your home district. There is more time and less distraction, and your position as a constituent will be enhanced if you are talking on "home turf."

Staff or Message: You may not be able to reach your legislator at the Capitol. Be prepared to talk to one of the legislator's staff or to leave a message instead. Make sure you get the staff person's full name, and treat them with respect.

Constituent: Begin by stating that you are a constituent or that you are calling on behalf of a constituent. Legislators are most responsive to the people who can keep them in office—their constituents. If you voted for the legislator, mention that as well.

Persuade: Get to the point. State the reason for the call. State your request in as few words as possible, for example, "Please support/ oppose Senate Bill 5."

Thank You: Regardless of their position, thank the legislator for his or her time.

Recruit: Recruit a like-minded friend, family member, or colleague to make a call as well. Particularly with phone calls, quantity is critical. Legislators pay attention to issues when they believe that many of their constituents care about that issue.

Report: Report your call. When you're part of a grassroots lobbying effort, your participation is helpful only if the people mobilizing the effort know about it. Let your grassroots organization know that you made the call, and report anything of importance that the legislator said.

Call Back: Call more than once and get your family, friends, neighbors, co-workers and others to call. Quantity is as important, if not more important, than quality in grassroots advocacy, because a high number of calls indicates to a legislator that many people in their district care about an issue. As you monitor the issue, call back to ask for specific support or action as is appropriate to the process.