

TIPS FOR CONTACTING YOUR LEGISLATOR

Please Read: Important info about contacting your legislator

GENERAL TIPS:

* Always use formal titles - Always refer to the person you are writing to with their formal title, and do it throughout the message. Even if you know the person personally, I would still strongly recommend calling them Representative or Senator.

* Be sure to reference the specific bill you are interested in by bill number and name. The proper format is H.B. 341, for example. (HB = "House Bill" and SB = "Senate Bill" as an example) Which one you use depends upon which house the bill was INTRODUCED in. If you are writing someone other than the bill's sponsor, try to include the name of the person proposing the bill.

* Always mention why your opinion matters - more specifically, state that you live in the legislators district, city, county, or are a citizen of Kansas. If you involved with an organization relating to an issue, mention that as well - if this is the case be sure to point out that you are acting as an individual.

* Keep messages short, generally less than three or four paragraphs.

* Avoid using arguments that are based on ideology - quoting scripture, party rhetoric, and/or sources that are less than reputable will make legislators ignore you and your message quick. This is especially true if you disagree with bill. If you agree, this still harms your argument and may cause a legislator to reevaluate their positions. Similarly, do use logic whenever possible; oftentimes when legislators write bills, they do not know about potential consequences to groups if the bill were to pass.

* If possible, be sure to include personal stories that explain how this bill would help or hurt you, your family, your friends, your organizations, etc.

* Be sure you have read the bill, or at the very least, read a summation of the bill from a reliable source, before writing - if you make inferences and logical leaps that are just not there, the legislator may ignore future correspondence from you.

* Always sign your name to all messages; it adds legitimacy and show you believe in your cause.

And that is about it. Remember that there is strength in numbers and that if you are able to get your friends to write as well, it only adds to the weight of your opinion. Don't forget that if you are passionate about some issue, there are probably people on the other side fighting to be successful as well - you don't want to screw it up for your side!

MAKING A PHONE CALL:

* Make sure to state your name, address and indicate that you are a constituent.

* Remember, you will usually be speaking with a secretary or aide who is keeping track of pro and con positions on a bill or issue, so the call will last a very short time.

Keep the phone call under five minutes, unless the aide or legislator prolongs the conversation.

- * Since conversations are brief: be prepared! Plan ahead what you want to talk about.
- * Give the name of the legislation – AB 5555 (Representative Sanders).
- * State clearly that you support or oppose AB 5555 and how you want the legislator to vote.
- * Include a statement about how the issue affects you personally.
- * Listen to the legislator's point of view. Be polite. Don't threaten.
- * Do not lie or try to talk your way around questions to which you do not know the answers. Say that you will get back to the legislator or aide, and then do so.
- * Take down the name of the aide with whom you spoke so that you will have a contact person in case you need to contact the legislator again.
- * Thank them for their time, both on the telephone and with a note of thanks for the conversation that includes a concise summary of your opinion.
- * Do not call too often and risk becoming a nuisance.

EMAILING YOUR LEGISLATOR:

- * If you work for a school district: be careful to use a private email and not your school email. There are regulations about using school computers/emails to lobby a cause.
- Include your location in the subject box of the message along with the topic of the email.
- Identify yourself as a constituent and include your name, address and phone number.
- If you have a connection with the legislator, state this up front in your email.
- Define the issue in up front and provide support in the body of the email.
- Ask for his or her support and be clear about what you what action you would like your legislator to take.
- Outline your concerns and explain the negative impact eliminating or reducing funding for gifted services could have on your students, children, and/or your business and the community.
- Share your opinion in a polite, positive way.
- Thank the legislator for his or her time.
- Keep the message to one screen length.