

All interactions with legislators follow the same basic format: introduce yourself as a constituent, share your issue and personal story, tell them why they should care, make your ask, and thank them for their time and service. Beyond that, make sure you are always courteous.

There are several ways to contact your federal and state legislators. Below you will find each way you can contact your legislator with tips for each type of interaction.

### Call Your Legislator

- Identify what you'd like your legislator to know about your issue. If you are asking them to support or not support a piece of legislation, make sure you know the bill number.
- Call your legislative office and say your name, where you live, and tell them that you are a constituent. Be friendly!
  - Know that you will not speak with your legislator, but rather a legislative aid or secretary. This is very normal – whoever answers the phone will take a message that will be passed to your legislator.
- After introducing yourself, give them your message about your issue. Try to be direct and to the point, but feel free to share a personal story that is compelling.
- At the end of your call, thank the person who answered the phone for their time.

### Visit Your Legislator

- If you are visiting your legislator in Washington, D.C., you should make an appointment with their office. If you are visiting your federal legislator at their home office, you should make an appointment with their office. If you are visiting your state legislator at the State House in Montgomery, you can attempt to make an appointment, but it is often just as effective to go and try to catch your legislator between meetings.
- Dress professionally when you go visit your legislator.
- Bring any materials you want your legislator to have, such as fact sheets, FAQs, maps, etc.
- Whether you meet with a legislator or legislative aid (very common on the federal level), introduce yourself and tell them that you are a constituent.
- Tell them about your issue. If you are talking to them about specific legislation, make sure you know the bill number.
- Tell them why you care about this issue. Now is the

time to share your personal story, or the story of others you know.

- Tell them why they should care – perhaps their constituents are affected, or it affects other things in their district.
- Make the ask – ask for their support, or non-support of legislation, or ask them to sponsor a bill on the issue.
- Thank them for their time and their service.

### Writing to Your Legislator

- Letters mailed to the office are the most effective way of writing to legislators. Emails can be lost in spam or overlooked.
- Make sure you address your legislator properly. The envelope address should say, "The Honorable...", but in your letter salutation you can refer to them as Representative, Congressman, Congresswoman, or Mr./Ms.
- Identify yourself as a constituent in their district.
- Share your issue and why you care about it. Now is the time to tell them your personal story.
- Tell them why you believe they should care about your issue, and make your ask.
- Thank them for their service.

Although these tips were written for interacting with your legislators, there are many other decision makers on the local, state, and federal level. School boards, city councils, state agencies, governors, judges, federal agencies, the president, and more make decisions that impact Americans every day. Make sure you reach out to them when necessary.