



Placing a Phone Call to an Elected Official

As a citizen, you have the right to call and express your opinion to an elected official. When the phone rings in our legislator's office, they are obligated to answer. When the phone rings continuously at our legislator's office regarding a specific issue, the elected official is compelled to take heed and hopefully take action.

Legislators work to serve the people. They cannot do their jobs effectively if they do not hear the opinions and interests of the people, especially the citizens in their district.

The following are some recommendations for placing a phone call to your elected official.

- Prepare. Have an outline or a mini-script of what you intend to discuss with the legislator. Do research before, if necessary, so that you know the subject and its relevancy to current legislation.
- Relax. If you are nervous, relax and treat the phone call like a normal telephone conversation. Do not read verbatim from a prepared script, but ensure that you speak coherently and slowly.
- Identify yourself. Identify yourself by giving your name and your address.
- Be brief. Clearly and concisely state your position and make your point. Limit your call to one issue. Make a separate phone call for other issues.
- Identify the legislation. Make sure you identify the legislation you are discussing by name and number or by its sponsors. If the legislator or staff person is not familiar with the legislation, provide them with a brief summary.
- Ask their viewpoint. Ask the legislator their view on the legislation.
- Ask for a vote. Ask the legislator for a commitment to vote for or against the legislation.

- Don't argue. It will be ineffective to engage in a longwinded argument with the legislator or staff person about the issue. You will be more likely to get your message across by keeping your conversation clear and succinct. Be courteous, direct and fair.
- Don't be discouraged. Don't give up if you get a busy signal. This simply means that others are getting through with a message as well. (You can always send a fax if you can't get through right away). Also, don't be discouraged if you speak with a staff person. Most legislative aides are very reliable in relaying the message and knowledgeable of the issues. Continue the conversation as if they are the legislator.
- Follow up. Send a note to the legislator thanking them or their staff for their time. This is a great opportunity to briefly restate your position in writing.
- Be positive. Positive phone calls to your legislator can be very helpful. If your official has a good environmental record or has recently supported pro-environmental legislation, a commendation is always received favorably by the legislator.