

TELEPHONE CALLS

Decision makers take notice when advocates call them about important issues. It is less time consuming than letter writing and more certain than an email that may never be answered. For this reason, using the telephone to contact legislators is a reliable way advocates can quickly get their voices heard.

While no strategy take the place of a face-to-face meeting with a legislator, calling the official's office assures that someone will answer. Advocates need to be aware that they may not get to talk directly to the legislator each time they call, but they can articulate their issue to the staffer they talk to and tell them what advocates in the their constituency want the legislator to do.

QUICK TIPS

When calling your legislator, remember to:

- Prepare your message before you place the call.
- Identify yourself as a constituent.
- Say exactly what you are call about. If there is a bill number, make sure to reference the bill or issue to make your point.
- Say specifically what you want the legislator to do. (e.g., vote against budget cuts, support a bill, etc.)
- Leave your name and contact information, including your address. This will assure the legislator know you are a constituent.
- Never criticize or become involved in a debate.
- Get to your point immediately. Chances are the call will only last a few minutes, so being to the point is critical in getting your message across.
- Conclude the call by thanking the legislator or staffer for their time and attention to the issue.
- Be willing to speak with the legislator's staff. Even if advocates do not speak to the legislator directly, the staffers are the ones who have the ear of the decision maker. Give the message on the issue at hand. Staff always report the numbers of calls both for and against any active legislation.

- Call the legislator at their contact number at the capitol – it may have more impact than calls to their local office. If they are home on legislative recess, however, the local office may provide an additional opportunity to speak with your legislator in a face-to-face setting.