

HOW TO CALL YOUR LEGISLATOR

Calling your legislator is as easy as picking up the phone, providing your opinion in a thoughtful manner, and asking for a response.

Why Do It?

Our legislators are busy and public education may not be an issue they are thinking about. They need to hear from constituents about how their decisions impact our children, our schools, and our communities. When advocates make phone calls it sends a message to legislators that their constituents are paying attention to what they're doing and it encourages them to make public education one of their top priorities.

A Call Is Easy and Goes Something Like This

- Introduce yourself and identify yourself as a constituent.
- State your topic and say what you care about, support or oppose, and why.
- Give an example of your personal experience when possible.
- ASK for a follow-up response.

Example of a Phone Call Script

Hi this is [Susan Pennsylvanian], I am a constituent of [Representative Handshaker], and I am calling because I strongly support public education and I am very concerned about the impact budget cuts have had on my child's school and on our community.

(The person answering your call will say something like, I'd be glad to take your information, the Representative isn't available right now, but we want to know your opinion].

[Example of something specific]: My 2nd grader's class went from 22 to 28 kids this year, and I think that is nuts! The kids are getting less individual attention. I just don't agree that this is the right solution to a state budget problem – we can't cut education, it is the thing that will strengthen our economy. We need to figure out how to deliver a high quality education to every child. The issue of public education is my top issue as a voter and taxpayer.

I am interested in the Representative's position on these cuts (or other issues that you are interested in) and would like to hear back about it. My address/email/phone is.... Thank you.

A few tips:

Be very pleasant to the staff.

They take a lot of calls, often from people who are upset about things (and some from people who just like to complain). We suggest thinking of it as a conversation you might have at work or a meeting: keep the tone professional and courteous, make your point about the issue.

Try to sound like yourself.

It is okay to prepare notes to remind yourself of what you are calling to say, but try not to read something. Share your sincere personal opinion and your reasons for it, in your own words.

Keep it short: a 2-3 minute call is usually plenty to say what you support (or oppose), why, and to give your contact information and ask for a response.

Don't expect to speak to the Representative, unless you know him/her personally. The staff is supposed to take your calls. At some point you may want to consider asking for a personal meeting, but that doesn't always happen right away; meanwhile, working with staff can be a good way to start making contact with the office and putting your issues on their radar.

Plan to call from time to time. It isn't like voting – you can do it more than once! Check in, let them know you are following the issue, talking to people in your community and will circle back from them as events develop.