

Are you nervous about interacting with your elected representative(s)?

Here are some tips to ensure that the encounter is positive and productive. Whether it's your first time or the hundredth time you will usually find that working with them is actually an enlightening experience for both parties

General Tips

Whether visiting, writing or calling your elected officials, be sure to:

- Identify yourself: If you are a voter in the elected official's district, say so.
- Be specific: State the issue clearly.
- Be personal: Let your elected official know why you support or oppose a measure. Tell him or her how the bill will affect you, your family, and your community. Your own experience will be of great interest and value.
- Be reasonably brief: Be considerate of your elected official's busy schedule. - Keep your visits, letters, and phone calls as brief as possible.
- Be polite: Don't be threatening, demanding or abusive. The first time you are will be the last time a elected official will be attentive to your concerns.

Personal Visit

A face-to-face visit is the most effective way to communicate with elected officials. Personal contact provides the best opportunity to clearly explain your position on an issue and allow them to ask questions about aspects of the issue that they may not be familiar with. Positive encounters with constituents are very important to elected officials looking ahead to reelection. To help your visit go smoothly:

- Make an appointment and be on time.
- Be courteous at all times and respectful of their opinions, never argumentative.
- Make clear what your issue and position are and what you would like your elected official to do.
- Provide your elected official with a brief, written summary of your issue.
- Don't let your elected official evade the issue with small talk; politely get to the point as quickly as possible.
- Follow up the visit with a thank you note.

Letters

Every letter you write is extremely important. Many elected officials believe that one letter represents the sentiments of at least 100 constituents. When writing to elected officials, remember to:

- Keep your letter brief. Write legibly or type.
- Give concrete examples of how you, your family, and your community are affected by a particular issue.
- Include your address and request a response.

Phone, Fax, E-mail

Prior to an important vote, communicating by telephone, fax, or e-mail can be effective in influencing the official's vote. Be sure to:

- Provide your name and address.
- Provide the name and when possible the bill number of the legislation. Clearly state your position.
- Ask how your elected official expects to vote on the issue.