

Get to Know Your Legislators

To make a difference in the legislative process, you must develop a relationship with your legislators. Keep in mind that you can work effectively with someone, regardless of the personal opinions either of you may hold. Although you are unlikely to agree on every issue, you can still build a positive relationship in the long run.

The best way to get to know your legislators on a personal basis is to spend time with them when the Legislature is not meeting. Arrange a meeting during the months between sessions when they are home.

Your legislators are also your neighbors. You share many of the same interests and concerns, so make a strong effort to build on the common ground you both hold. Take the time to find out who they are as people.

You can contact your legislators in a number of ways:

Personal visit. Call the office, introduce yourself, tell the legislator or the legislative assistant what you would like to discuss, and make an appointment for a visit. Use the [Member Rosters](#) to find the phone numbers. If you plan a visit, be prepared for your discussion. Know what you want to say, be factual, and make your comments as brief and specific as you can. If you do not know something, be willing to admit it and offer to follow up with more information later, which is also an avenue for further discussion.

Attend a Town Hall Meeting. Most legislators conduct periodic town hall meetings at various locations in their district. This is a good opportunity to meet your legislator and to express your views and concerns in an informal setting.

Write a letter. Express your views and request the member's attention through the mail. Make your letters brief, to the point, clear, and formal. Include your mailing address and phone number so the legislator knows where to respond. Use the [Member Rosters](#) to find the mailing addresses.

Send an e-mail message. Like letters, e-mails should be brief, to the point, clear, and formal. Include your name and mailing address, as well as your e-mail address, and let the legislator know how you'd prefer to be contacted. Use the [Member E-mail Address](#) list to find the e-mail addresses for legislators.

Call the toll-free Legislative Hotline. You can call the toll-free Hotline at **1.800.562.6000** to leave a message on any issue.

Testify before a committee. Make your views and positions known by testifying before a committee that is having public hearings on an issue or bill.

Get to Know Legislative Staff

Legislators rely heavily on professional staff for information gathering and analysis. You can play an equally supportive role by making sure staff is aware of the perspective your personal knowledge and experience can provide.

Legislative staff works on a wide range of issues. They always appreciate new sources of clear and accurate information, and they can provide you with the most current information they have.

Key Points to Remember

Regardless of how frequently you contact your legislators, you will be far more effective if you follow these points:

1. Be well prepared for your discussions.
2. Provide a written statement with all verbal presentations.
3. Make letters and e-mail formal, specific, and concise.
4. Don't berate or argue with your legislator when you disagree. Simply thank the member for the time spent with you and express a desire for further discussion.

Whatever position you represent, however, remember your participation makes a difference. Our legislative process is one way each of us may contribute to the quality of life we experience in our state. Your willingness to be a responsible, involved participant is crucial to the decision-making process.