The Florida Senate

Effective Communication With a Legislator

As a Floridian, one of your greatest responsibilities is to help elect the legislators who represent you and the state's more than 14 million other residents. But your role in the democratic process of government does not end at the polls. By sharing your opinions and ideas with your Representatives and Senators in Tallahassee, you help them decide what to do about the issues and pending legislation that affect us all. They value your suggestions and encourage you to express them.

Your legislators receive a huge amount of phone calls and mail from their constituents. Unfortunately, their full agendas limit their ability to personally respond to them all. How, then, can you be sure your voice is heard? Here are some tips to help you get the most impact out of your communications with your legislators in Tallahassee.

General Tips

- Know who your legislators are and how to contact them. If you aren't sure who represents your community, you can find out by using the Find Your Legislator tool. Your Senator's flsenate.gov page will give you his or her mailing addresses, phone numbers, social media links, and email address.
- Review how the legislative process works. Understanding how an idea becomes a law will help you effectively express your own ideas.
- Contact your legislator about a particular issue before the Legislature takes action on it. If you are unsure where an issue is in the process, you can visit http://flsenate.gov/Session/Bills to find a bill's next stop.
- Use a variety of communication methods. You might choose to contact your legislator by phone, letter, email, fax, social media, or visiting in person.
- Another great way to spread your message is to give testimony at public hearings held by the Legislature. To give testimony, you need to contact the appropriate committee administrative assistant to sign up. You can visit to fill out an appearance card, or do so in person at the committee meeting.
- Be concise, yet specific. Tell your legislator what effect you think a particular issue or bill, if it becomes law, will have on you, your children, business, or community. Also, suggest a course of action and offer assistance.
- The Legislature is an institution where people on opposite sides of issues have an opportunity to engage in thoughtful debate. Therefore, it is important to be polite, even if you disagree strongly with the legislator you are addressing.

Writing Effective Letters

- Address letters to members of the Legislature as follows:

The Honorable John Doe
State Senator, District #
The Capitol
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1100

- Use the right address and spell your legislator's name correctly. Type or print legibly. Sign your name neatly and give your address correctly so the legislator can respond to your letter.
- Keep letters, email, and faxes as brief as possible. Concisely written correspondence is more likely to grab and keep the reader's attention.
- Identify your issue or opinion at the beginning of the letter; don't bury your main point.
- Cover only one issue per letter. If you have another issue to address, write another letter.
- Back up your opinions with supporting facts. Your letter should inform the reader, and facts make an argument more tangible and convincing.
- Avoid abbreviations or acronyms, and don't use technical jargon.
- Don't send the same letter to more than one legislator. Personalized letters have a greater impact.

Calling or Visiting Your Legislator

- Plan your call or visit ahead of time. When preparing to visit your legislator, make an appointment. Call or write to schedule the meeting as soon as you know when you are going to be at the Capitol. This way you can be sure you will be able to meet with your legislator.
- Keep to the point and discuss only one issue. Organizing your thoughts ahead of time and making notes to help you stay on track can be very helpful.
- Prepare a one-page fact sheet concerning your issue to give to your legislator. This will help him or her better retain what you present.

Disclaimer: The information on this system is unverified. The journals or printed bills of the respective chambers should be consulted for official purposes.

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