

HOW TO TALK TO YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

Elected officials work for their constituents—which means you. You have the right to communicate your beliefs to them. Here are some tips on choosing how to talk to them and the best way to get your message across.

CHOOSE HOW TO REACH OUT:

In-Person Meeting

If you're comfortable speaking, an in-person meeting is likely to have the biggest impression. Face-to-face interactions are the best way to create lasting relationships.

Letter

(It's better to write to a state office than federal one)

It may be easier to write an email but a letter will get more attention because it's less common. It's also harder to overlook a piece of paper, while emails get easily lost in someone's inbox.

Phone Call

A large enough number of phone calls to an official's office prevents staff members from getting anything else done—forcing the official to pay attention.

Town Hall Meeting

Most elected officials hold several public meetings a year. While you're most likely to reach staffers when you call or write, at these meetings you're guaranteed to get your official's ear.

MAKE IT PERSONAL:

There are plenty of scripts out there to use, but a personal story is more memorable, making it more likely that staff members will pass it on to their boss. There's also a greater chance the official—if a local one—will call you back.

DO YOUR RESEARCH:

- Understand your issue and what the official is capable of doing to create change. (You don't want to ask for more than what's possible.)
- Make sure you know where an official stands on an issue so you can clearly address that person's position. To do so, you can check the official's website or research that person's public statements on the topic.

BE CLEAR ABOUT YOUR GOALS:

Be explicit about when you hope the official will take action and how you plan to follow up.

BE RESPECTFUL:

Being rude to the staffers who answer your calls, letters and emails won't help your cause. Good reasoning and powerful stories will.



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