

Telephoning Your Legislator

Some messages are better suited to certain methods of communication. If you wish to simply request that your legislator vote “yes” or “no” on a particular piece of legislation, then pick up the phone and call their office. Also opt for a phone call if the legislator will be voting shortly. Your group can use the telephone as a grassroots-lobbying tool by organizing a “call-in-day” and spreading the word to your activists, encouraging them to participate. However, it is far better to use a personal letter or face-to-face meeting to deliver complicated messages and do relationship-building with legislators.

A local Seattle legislator once said that he does not think it is appropriate for constituents to call and ask to speak to him unless he has a personal relationship with them. This is a good rule to follow. When you call a legislator you do not have a relationship with, just leave your message with the staff person who handles the call.

Telephone Tips

- Before you pick up the phone, write out the name of the legislation you are calling about, how you want the legislator to vote, and two or three short reason why he/she should vote that way.
- When your call is answered, identify yourself by name and (always) state that you are a constituent of the legislator.
- Explain why you are calling. Be specific about the piece of legislation you are calling about, referring to its bill number, if possible.
- Do not simply say, “I am calling to urge the senator to vote “no.” instead, tell the staff person why the Senator should vote “no.” provide supporting information by focusing on two or three of the talking points you wrote down.
- Ask that your message be conveyed to the legislator and that you receive a written response.
- Remember to politely thank the person taking the call for his/her time.
- Keep your call short and to the point.

