

## 10 Steps for Calling Your Elected Official or Representative

Making a phone call to your elected official or representative is quick, easy, and can be done at a moment's notice, making it an attractive method for legislative contact.

For these same reasons, it is critical that the phone call be effective. You don't need to be an expert on the issue in order to be persuasive; you just need to give your personal perspective.

Follow these ten steps for an effective call to your elected official or representative:

1. **Plan.** Before you make the call, plan what you are going to say. Your phone call will be very brief, so keep your message simple and to the point. Take a moment to think about it—you might even want to make some notes—and you'll find that your call goes more smoothly than if you were to call "off the cuff." Know your request (for example, vote for a specific bill) in as few words as possible.
2. **Message.** After identifying (and possibly writing down) your request, think about a key point or personal story that supports your position.
3. **Call.** Make the call. If your legislator is in your home district on specific days or on weekends, call them when they are in your home district. There is more time and less distraction, and your position as a constituent will be enhanced if you are talking on "home turf."
4. **Staff or Message.** You may not be able to reach your elected official or representative. Be prepared to talk to one of his or her staff or to leave a message instead. Make sure you get the staff person's full name, and treat them with respect.
5. **Constituent.** Begin by stating that you are a constituent. Elected officials and representatives are most responsive to the people who can keep them in office: their constituents. If you voted for the legislator, mention that as well.
6. **Persuade.** Get to the point. Following your plan, state the reason for the call. Try to get the elected official or representative to state their position on the issue, and try to persuade them using the points you developed.
7. **Thank.** If the elected official or representative agrees to support your issue, thank them. Regardless of their position, thank them for their time. Let them know that you will be tracking the issue.
8. **Recruit.** Recruit a like-minded friend, family member, or colleague to make a call as well. Particularly with phone calls, quantity is critical. Elected officials and representatives pay attention to issues when they believe that many of their constituents care about that issue.
9. **Report your call.** When you are part of a grassroots lobbying effort, your participation is helpful only if the people mobilizing the effort know about it. Let them know that you made the call, and report anything of import that the elected official or representative said.
10. **Call more than once.** Quantity is as important, if not more important, than quality in grassroots advocacy. A high number of calls indicates that many people in their voting district care about an issue. As you monitor the issue, call back to ask for specific support or action as appropriate to the process.