



CONTACTING YOUR ELECTED OFFICIAL

PHONE CALL:

- Introduce yourself by name and address.
 - Identify the issue you wish to talk about.
 - Briefly state your position and what action you would like your legislator to take.
 - If you feel comfortable, ask your legislator about his or her position on the issue. Does he or she support it? Will he or she vote for it?
 - If it doesn't feel appropriate, it's not a problem, but sometimes it can be helpful to know where they stand on the issue.
 - Recognize that legislators are often away from their office, at committee hearings or in the chamber, so you may talk instead with an aide or an answering machine. If so, use these same basic rules. If you prefer to leave a message, it is best to call on the weekends or after 5 p.m. during the week.
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LETTER OR EMAIL:

- **Be brief:** The ideal letter is one page.
- **Describe yourself:** Make sure the elected official knows your full name, address, phone number, and email address so they can respond if they choose to.
- **Be precise:**
 - Include the bill's name or number, your preferred method of voting, and your identity as a constituent in the subject line of any email you send (e.g. constituent asks you to support House Bill 1234).
 - Instead of being general, provide specific data, information, and anecdotes about how the topic affects you or your community. This means supporting your position in the letter with specific examples and evidence.
- **Be nice:** Be professional, polite, and respectful. Use the legislator's full name and title (e.g. "Dear Senator Conley"), and refrain from using derogatory language.
- **Give reason:** Share reasons for caring about the problem and how it affects you. Describe any relevant professional qualifications or personal experience you bring to the problem.
- **Be clear:** State your position and request to them clearly.
- **Stay focused:** Try to stick to a single topic in your letters rather than sending a lengthy laundry list of issues.
- **Say thank you:** Thank the representative for their service to the community and for taking the time to read your letter. Never demand a response.

EXAMPLE PHONE CALL SCRIPT:

Hi, my name is _____, and I am one of your constituents. My address is _____, in _____ neighborhood/town/county. I am calling to urge you to support House Bill 1234, which will lower the cost of child care for working families in Montana. The Montana child care assistance program is reformed in a number of positive ways by this bill to make child care more affordable, make life easier for working parents, and remove obstacles for small businesses that provide child care throughout the state. I'm excited that this legislation would allow parents to go to work with less stress, ensure children have access to healthy experiences, and continue to help keep our economy moving. I hope that you will support HB1234. Please let me know if there is any other information I can provide you. My telephone number is (406) 111-2222. Much thanks to you for your support of our state.

EXAMPLE LETTER OR EMAIL:

Date
 Senator's Name
 Senator's Address

Dear Senator _____,
 (In your first paragraph include personal information) I am extremely fortunate to have received a high-quality education that helped me prepare for the future. My children are currently enrolled in middle school and elementary school. I've recently become concerned about how laws affect education. I am confident that you share many of these concerns as a parent.

(Include facts) Schools with robust school library media programs have higher success rates, according to research. For instance, schools with full-time librarians performed better on standardized tests than schools with only part-time librarians in Alaska. Numerous other states in the United States have reported findings that are comparable.

(State what you are asking for) I request your support for (insert bill name here). The school library's media programs will receive funding if this bill is supported. This is a small price to pay to invest in our nation's children's future. Every child should have the chance to achieve and acquire future-relevant skills. If you support this bill, I believe you will have an impact on the lives of many children.

Thank you!

Sincerely,

(Your Name)
 (Your Address)

ADDRESS LETTERS:

Sen. XXXX
 Montana Senate
 State Capitol PO Box 200500
 Helena, MT 59620-0500

OR

Rep. XXXX
 Montana House of Representatives
 State Capitol PO Box 200400
 Helena, MT 59620-0400