

CONTACTING YOUR ELECTED OFFICIAL

Each elected official has their preferences regarding engagement. Building a genuine relationship can be very helpful. There are a variety of ways to contact your elected officials including:

- Writing a letter or email
- Calling or texting on the phone
- Scheduling a one-on-one meeting
- Providing public comment or testimony (watch this [video](#) for helpful tips)

Letter or Email Contact Tips:

- **Be brief:**
 - The ideal letter is one page. Aim for 3–4 short paragraphs.
- **Describe yourself:**
 - Include your full name, address, phone number, and email address so they know you're a constituent and can respond if they choose.
 - Explain why you care about the issue and how it affects you or your community.
 - Mention any relevant expertise or personal experience you bring to the issue.
- **Be precise and clear:**
 - Mention the bill's name or number, your position on it, and that you are a constituent in the subject line of any email (e.g., "Constituent asks for support on House Bill 1234").
 - Avoid jargon and keep the language accessible.
- **Provide specific details:**
 - Share personal stories or relevant data about how the issue impacts you or your community.
 - Use credible sources for any data or statistics.
- **Be nice:**
 - Address them formally using their title and last name (e.g., "Dear Senator Conley").
 - Maintain a polite tone even if you disagree.
- **Stay focused:**
 - Stick to one topic or issue per letter to avoid overwhelming the recipient.
- **Include a call to action (if you wish):**
 - End with a specific request (e.g., "Please vote yes on House Bill 1234").
- **Say thank you:**
 - Thank them for their service and for taking the time to read your letter. Avoid demanding a response, but feel free to follow up politely if you don't hear back.

Phone Call Tips:

- **Introduce yourself:**
 - Start with your full name and address to identify yourself as a constituent.
- **State your purpose:**
 - Clearly mention the issue you are calling about and your position (e.g., “I’m calling to ask Senator Conley to support House Bill 1234, which addresses early childhood education”).
- **Make your request:**
 - Briefly explain what action you’d like your legislator to take (e.g., “I hope you will vote in favor of this bill”).
- **Ask about their position (if comfortable):**
 - Politely ask: “Could you share the Senator’s position on this issue? Does he/she plan to support it?”
 - If it doesn’t feel appropriate or comfortable, that’s okay—move on to the next step.
- **Leaving a message:**
 - Keep the message concise. Include your name, address, the issue you’re calling about, your position, and your request (e.g., “Please support House Bill 1234”).
- **Thank them:**
 - End the call by thanking the person for their time, whether it’s the legislator or voicemail.
- **Follow up if necessary:**
 - If you don’t hear back within a week or so, consider calling again to politely follow up.



Do you know who represents you?

Use the *Find Your Legislators* tool to identify your state representatives (www.legmt.gov/districts/).



SCAN ME

Example Phone 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 vote yes on House Bill 1234 to make child care more affordable for working Montana families. This bill makes many good changes to our Montana child care assistance program to increase the affordability of child care, ease burdens for working parents and cut red tape for small businesses providing child care across the state. I'm excited that this legislation would help keep our economy moving by getting parents to work and ensuring all Montana kids have access to healthy experiences that let them learn and grow. I hope I can count on you to support HB1234. A return call is not necessary, but if you would like to speak with me, my phone number is (406) 111-2222. Thank you for your service to 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 been provided with an excellent education that prepared me for the future. I currently have children in both elementary and middle school. Recently, I have become concerned about the legislative impact on education. As a parent yourself, I am sure that you share many of these concerns.

(Include facts) Research has shown that schools with strong school library media programs have better rates of success. For example, in Alaska it was found that schools with a full-time librarian scored higher on standardized tests than schools with only part time librarians. These schools were able to have longer hours of operation, leading to higher rates of circulation, thus impacting student achievement. Similar findings have been made in many other states across our country.

(State what you are asking for) I ask that you support (Insert name of bill here). In supporting this bill funding will be provided that will support the school library media programs. This is a small price to invest in the future of our nation's children. All children should have the opportunity to achieve and develop skills necessary for the future. I believe that in supporting this bill you will impact the lives of countless 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