

ADVOCACY TOOLS

HOW TO CALL YOUR LEGISLATOR

This is an effective way to make your voice heard. It's easy and doesn't take much time.

Why Do It?

Many legislators want to know what the public considers important. They will be very interested in your opinion if you voted for them or not. Even if you don't always see eye to eye with your representative, it is still valuable for them, and for your community, to know what your priorities are, what you care about and what you'll pay attention to.

Remember: a good quality public education and the impact it has on our economy is supported by the vast majority of Pennsylvanians, regardless of political party. There is support for strong public education among political representatives and leaders of both parties as well. Calling Representatives, Democratic and Republican, is a way to show them that once the campaigns are over, they need to pay attention to all constituents and the prosperity of the entire Commonwealth.

A Call Is Easy and Goes Something Like This

- Introduce yourself and identify yourself as a constituent.
- State your topic and say WHAT you care about, SUPPORT or OPPOSE, WHY
- Give an example of your personal experience when possible.
- ASK for a FOLLOW UP RESPONSE

Example of a Phone Call Script

Hi this is Susan Pennsylvanian, I am a constituent of Representative Handshaker, and I am calling because I strongly support public education and I am very concerned about the impact of budget cuts on my school, and on our community.

The person answering your call will say something like: *I'd be glad to take your information, the Representative isn't available right now, but we want to know your opinion/care about hearing from people in the community.*

[Example of something specific]: My 2nd grader's class went from 22 to 28 kids this year, and I think that is nuts! The kids are getting less individual attention, and I just don't agree that this is the right solution to a state budget problem – we can't cut education, it is the thing that will re-build our economy! Instead of looking at gimmicky and unproven reforms (like vouchers) I really think we need to figure out how to deliver a high quality education to every child.

The issue of public education is my top issue as a voter and taxpayer!

I am interested in the Representative's position on these cuts (or other issues that you are interested in) and would like to hear back about it. My address/email/phone is.... Thank you.

A few tips:

• **Be really pleasant to the staff.** They take a lot of calls, often from people who are upset about things (and some from people who just like to complain). We suggest thinking of it as a conversation you might have at work or a meeting: keep the tone professional and courteous, make your point about the issue.

• **Try to sound like yourself.** It is okay to prepare notes to remind yourself what you are calling to say, but try not to read something. Share your sincere personal opinion and your reasons for it, in your own words.

• **Keep it short:** a 2-3 minute call is usually plenty to say WHAT you SUPPORT (or oppose), WHY, and to give your contact information and ask for a response.

• **Don't expect to speak to the Representative,** unless you know them personally. The staff is supposed to take your calls. At some point you may want to consider asking for a personal meeting, but that doesn't always happen right away; meanwhile working with staff can be a good way to start making contact with the office and put your issues on their radar.

• **PLAN TO CALL from time to time! It isn't like voting – you can do it more than once!** Check in, let them know you are following the issue, talking to people in your community and will circle back from them as events develop.