

Tips for Visiting a State Legislator

Adapted from Partners in Policymaking
<http://www.pipcalifornia.org/topics/advocacy-resources/>

Here are some tips for planning a visit to your state Senator or Assemblymember in Sacramento:

- 1) Find the names of your state Senator and Assemblymember if you don't know them. Go to <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/yourleg.html> and enter your zip code.
- 2) Write a few sentences about the issue that concerns you and why you want to meet with the legislator. Be sure to have these sentences in front of you when you call the legislator's office so that you can clearly and concisely explain why you want to meet.
- 3) Decide when you would like to visit.
- 4) Call the legislator's office in Sacramento. Ask to speak to the person who schedules visits for the legislator.
- 5) Explain that you are a resident in the legislator's district, why you would like to visit, and when you would like to make the visit. Use the information you wrote down in #2 above. If the representative is not available, ask to meet with the staff person who handles the issue you are interested in.
- 6) You will often be asked to mail, fax or email a letter requesting the meeting. If so, send a short letter that states: (a) who you are, (b) what group you represent, (c) names of anyone who will attend the meeting with you, (d) why you want to meet, (e) when you want to meet, and (f) your contact information (phone number, address, email address).
- 7) If a written request for a meeting is required, call back about a week after sending your request to follow up on scheduling a meeting.

When you visit:

- Take a short, written statement of the issue you are concerned about and what your position is on the issue. Leave this statement with the legislator or staff member so that they remember the purpose of your visit and your views. Be sure to include your contact information so that they can contact you to follow up if necessary.
- Take a camera to get a picture of the visit.
- Be at the legislator's office 5 minutes early for the meeting.
- Write a thank you letter after the visit. Remind the legislator or staff member of the issue you are concerned about and your views on the issue. Be sure to include your contact information and say that you are available if they have future questions.

Writing Letters to Legislators

From Family Voices of California

<http://www.familyvoicesofca.org/writinglegislators.doc>

Addressing Letters

California State Assemblymembers / Senators

The Honorable (full name of legislator)
California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room (number)
Sacramento, CA 94249

Dear Assemblymember (last name):

The Honorable (full name of legislator)
California State Senate
State Capitol, Room (number)
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Senator (last name):

Congressional Representatives

The Honorable (Full Name of Legislator)
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative (last name):

The Honorable (Full Name of Legislator)
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator (last name):

Tips for Writing

- Type or write legibly
- Include the bill number in the first sentence, or describe the issue you are writing about and what you are asking the legislator to do
- Be brief and clear (one page or less, one issue per letter)
- Use your own words and avoid the appearance of a form letter
- Give your reasons for supporting or opposing a bill/proposals
- Use a personal story, to show the impact of the bill/proposal on your family
- Be polite and courteous in your request for support or opposition
- Ask for a response to your request
- Use short sentences
- Proofread your letter
- Be sure to include your full name and home address in the letter

Guide for Letter Writing

Dear Senator/Assemblymember Johnson:

First paragraph:

- I am writing in opposition/support of or about (your issue/proposal/bill number)
- I live in your district
- This issue is important to me/my family because...

Second paragraph

- Share your personal story or perspective explaining how this issue/proposal/bill affects you/family and why you oppose/support it

Third paragraph

- I urge you to support/oppose this issue/proposal/bill
- Please respond to me to let me how you will vote or address this issue

Sincerely,

Your name, full address, telephone number, email address (if you have one)