



Tips and Tricks to Engaging your Legislators

When writing, calling, or meeting with your legislator...

Use the Proper Format

Address mail to The Honorable (full name). In the greeting, address the official by his or her title and last name, e.g. "Dear Senator Smith."

Be Specific and Brief

At the beginning of your letter or phone call, identify the specific issue or bill number to which you are referring. Briefly state your position and keep your correspondence brief. When meeting with your legislator, a ten to fifteen minute meeting is suggested.

Be Prepared

When calling or visiting your legislator, be prepared to answer specific questions. If meeting with the elected official, bring or provide written information to support your position. A one-page document listing specific points is advisable. Make appointments to meet with your legislator and always be on time. Legislators have busy schedules while they are in session, so make your appointment in advance.

Tell Stories

Wherever possible, put a human spin on the message. Talk about specific programs and include anecdotal stories about how programs and public dollars affect real human beings. Legislators lend a more sympathetic ear to examples of real people.

Be Reasonable

An emotional appeal is not enough. Back your arguments with facts and substance. Show how proposed legislation would affect the arts, your community, and your organization.



Be Positive and Cordial

Your tone should be cooperative and professional. Do not threaten the legislator by stating that not supporting your position will result in a lost vote. Ask your legislator to state his or her position in a written reply. Make sure to include a return address in your letter.

Follow Up

After a meeting or phone call, follow up with a thank you letter that restates the points covered during the meeting. Send any additional information and materials requested. The communication between you and the elected official (and his or her staff) needs to be friendly and ongoing.

Express Appreciation

Don't forget to thank your legislator when he or she votes in support of your position. Legislators appreciate this recognition. Here's a [sample thank you letter to elected officials](#).

Other Tips to Foster Communication with Your Elected Officials

- Know your legislators. Find out about their interests. Learn about their committee assignments.
- Send a poster of any arts event, past or present, to your elected official.
- Send elected officials your calendar of events.
- Put elected officials on your mailing list. Invite them to opening receptions and performances by sending a personalized letter.
- Invite elected officials to MC a program or present awards. Put them on stage. Recognize them as a special guest at a performance or exhibit.
- Engage your board and audience. Ask your programs participants and audience members to send messages to your elected officials. Audience members should send letters on personal stationery. Board members who represent corporations should send letters on their business stationery. Keep the message simple and use a positive tone.