

How to Talk to Legislators

1. Look up to see who your MO Senator and House of Representatives are at [Legislator Lookup](#) or [Find My Legislator](#).
2. Contact the legislator's office, through email or via phone, to work with staff to set up an appointment.
3. Learn as much as you can about the legislator. Read their bio. Understand their issues and how it can relate to you being a constituent. Do not overlook the small things such as kids. Any background information that you can glean from the Internet or other credible sources is helpful. Referencing those things in discussion helps establish rapport and credibility
4. Take specific talking points. Talking points need to be limited to no more than 4-5. You need to succinctly communicate the "ask".
5. Be familiar with your talking points. Do not go off topic. Be focused. Focus, focus, focus! Deviating from the points will cause the legislator to lose interest. Brevity is THE MOST IMPORTANT recommendation we can make to constituents.
6. Have verifiable and accurate information. Do not have bad statistics. This is especially true if you are handing out any literature. Providing false or inaccurate information destroys credibility.
7. Identify that you are the legislator's constituent and how issues affect his/her district. This is particularly important if you are in Jefferson City. Few people take the time to visit their legislator(s) at the Capitol, so when constituents visit, you need to be certain that the official and the staff recognize you as a constituent.
8. Answer questions properly. If you do not know the answer, tell them you will get back with them. Do not answer questions that you do not know.
9. Close out meeting by extending an offer to help in any way. The point of the visit and the subsequent correspondence is to offer to be a resource for them - especially on issues in which the constituent is knowledgeable.
10. Follow up with an email or letter thanking them for their time. Give them a summary. Remind them of what you discussed, restate the "asks", and make sure they have your contact information in case they have questions.

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Tips for navigating the process.

Relationship-Building

Having a personal relationship with your legislators is the single most important step. Think of it the same way you would with a patient: this is a long-term relationship.

- Invite your legislator (or a candidate) to visit your workplace.
- Familiarize legislators with your practice.
- Tell them your concerns. Introduce the legislator to employees.
- Create a steady stream of communication that allows future correspondence. Your legislator will rely on you as a source of information and advice when faced with decisions on health care issues.

Tips for Contacting Legislators

- Make your contact early. Time your contact so that your letter or telephone call is received before significant action is taken, or while legislators are not in session.
- Identify yourself. Sign all correspondence, include your email, address, and telephone number. Your legislator may want to get back in touch with you.
- Be brief. Give your position and make your point as clearly and concisely as possible.
- Be logical. An emotional appeal is not enough. Back your arguments with facts and substance. Explain how the proposed legislation will affect you.
- Be specific. Refer to an issue by bill number and discuss its content. Clearly identify the action (support, oppose, amend) you would like your legislator to take.
- Be positive and cordial. Your tone should be professional, clear and cordial. Never ask the impossible or threaten to vote for someone else.
- Say thanks. Saying thanks when appropriate is effective and appreciated.

Face-to-Face Visit Guidelines

- Appointments are not necessarily required, but are strongly recommended.
- Introduce yourself as a constituent to the legislator and office staff.
- Meet the staff in the Legislative Services Office. They are knowledgeable and willing to help.
- Identify your subject: state the name of the bill and give them the Assembly or Senate bill number.
- Come to committee meetings or appointments prepared to clearly state your thoughts and arguments on the issue. Leave them a note with your position.
- As a constituent, you are entitled to know your legislator's position on the issue. Ask specifically if they intend to vote 'yes' or 'no' on the bill. If his or her answer is not clear to you, ask them again.
- Thank your legislator for his or her time in any event.

Telephone Call Guidelines

- Introduce yourself as a health care provider and a constituent.
- When the legislature is in session, any number of people can answer the phone: a secretary, aide, intern or even the legislator. All are knowledgeable and professional.
- Identify your subject clearly: state your concern and, if appropriate, the related Assembly or Senate bill number.
- Clearly state your position to let them know specifically whether you want them to vote 'yes' or 'no'. It is okay to ask for your legislator's position on the issue.
- If you talk to the legislator personally, feel free to share your personal experiences and the reason for your opinion.
- Be respectful of your legislator's time. Thank him or her for taking the time to listen.