

Developing effective communication strategies with legislators and legislative candidates

PREPARATION

- Become knowledgeable about the issue(s) and/or legislation that you want to discuss with your legislator. Keep your issues to a minimum (preferably one per communication).
- Seek out information about the individual with whom you want to influence (committee assignments, positions on issues, bills supported in the past, etc.)

MAKING CONTACT

- Identify yourself first and foremost as their constituent or if a candidate, a member of the district
- Identify yourself as a member of an organization (e.g. LWVHHI-BA, LLLC, Indivisible, ACLU, LCV, political party affiliation, etc.) **only if** it is both germane and helpful. Clearly state that you are sharing your thinking or position on the issue as a constituent (or voter) and that you do not necessarily represent the position of the organization.
- State something as fact only if you have a reliable source to back up the fact. Otherwise, be clear that this is your thinking or opinion on the issue and why it is important to you.
- Ask for their thinking on the issue and offer to share information that you have on the issue, particularly if they say that they need to know more about it. (Attach, hand them or offer to send them a copy of the bill, informational sheet or give them a web address to access more information, for example.)
- Show appreciation for their time, effort, etc on this issue (including perhaps a related issue that you know they have worked on or supported).

CONTENT OF COMMUNICATION

(letter, email, media contact, phone call, in person contact, etc.)

- Open your communication with a short, engaging introduction to yourself and the issue.
- Keep to two or three top points that are hopefully also the most powerful and compelling ones.
- State the most important information at the beginning; don't be vague.
- Real life stories can be very helpful if you can keep the story short and to the point.
- Advocate for a specific action from them (support the bill, ask for a committee hearing, speak to others about the issue, etc.)
- Avoid being critical of their positions; avoid personal attacks.
- Give credit where credit is due.
- Be brief, be objective, and be fair and reasonable.
- If engaged with a dialog with your legislator via written communication or in person, be attentive to their views and, if possible, seek a middle ground. Suggest potential areas of agreement, as well as possible areas for compromise.
- If applicable, follow-up with a note of thanks and reemphasize key points that were discussed. You can also include additional information that you have found on the issue.