Phoning Elected Officials

While sending an e-mail is an effective and preferred means of establishing contact with a public official, a telephone call is most appropriate when time is short. A phone call just before an important vote may have an impact on a legislator's decision to support or oppose an issue.

Use these following tips when telephoning an elected official.

Know the Facts:

- What is the bill number, proposed title, and author's name?
- What specific section concerns you (or the group you represent)?
- How does the proposal affect you, your job, and your industry?
- What is the problem with the proposed legislation?
- What action should the official take to address the proposal?

Place the Call:

- Calls are often taken by a receptionist. Ask to speak with the official. If the official is not available, ask to speak to the legislative aide who deals with the issue you are concerned about. *For example: "I am calling to speak to the person who handles immigration issues for the senator".*
- If there is a receptionist –do not leave a message with the receptionist, but rather leave the message on the voice mail of the staffer you are trying to reach. Take note of the staffers names for future correspondence.
- Identify yourself as a constituent and what you are calling about. And, if applicable, the organization you work for.
- Present the facts by stating your position and focusing on how the legislation will affect you, your business, or your industry.
- Use layman's terms – refrain from jargon and acronyms that may be unfamiliar to the person on the other end of the call.
    - For Example: "Please tell Mayor/Senator/Representative (Name) that I am calling to urge him/her to support/oppose (S.___/H.R.___)."
- Try to be precise about what you are asking the lawmaker to do.
- State the reasons you are asking the official to support or oppose the bill or take certain action.
- If you don't already know, ask for their position on the bill or issue.
- Prepare to answer questions and/or listen to the official's concerns.
- Seek a commitment from the official.
- Thank the staffer or official for listening to your concerns.

Follow Up:

- Determine how the official voted and/or addressed the issue.
- Request a written response to your telephone call or leave your phone number so your official or staffer can call you for a follow-up conversation.
- If you ask for a written response, be sure to leave your mailing address.
- Communicate with the official afterward. If the vote was in your favor, thank the official. If the vote was not in your favor, note your disappointment while maintaining correct political decorum.

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