

TIPS ON LEGISLATIVE ADVOCATING

When advocating for an issue, here are some tips to remember: When you are passive, you are not supporting issues that could improve your life; nor, are you helping to stop detrimental actions. When you are aggressive, you often make more enemies, and less change. When you are assertive and respect others, people listen.

The four common methods for communicating with your policy makers are letters, phone calls, faxes, and e-mail. Most legislators are conscientious about their mail and consider the views of the constituents when they deliberate an issue.

1. When expressing your opinions by letter:

- a. The first paragraph should state the purpose for writing, including the policy or bill title and number. State what action you are seeking.
- b. The body of the letter should explain the reason for the action you are seeking. Support information can include personal experience, how it will benefit the community, research, statistics, or any other information to give the legislator reasons to support your opinion.
- c. Last paragraph, thank the legislator for his time and attention. Restate the action seeking and if you want a written response to your letter, request it here.
- d. Include your name and address in your letter.
- e. Address only one issue per letter, and if possible, one page long.

2. When expressing your opinions by e-mail or fax, follow the same letter-writing guidelines. You may want to include your e-mail address or fax phone number along with your name and address. Also, when e-mailing, send individual e-mails. Sending several e-mails at one time, though convenient for you, is disregarded by policy makers.

3. When telephoning, the key here is to be organized before picking up the phone.

- a. Prepare in advance the points you want to convey.
- b. Be ready to identify yourself, affiliation if any, and the purpose of your call.
- c. Request to speak to the Representative, and if not available, ask for the staff member handling the matter. Explain the reasons for your call.
- d. Be prepared to answer questions or provide information.
- e. Thank the person you spoke with.

4. Last thing, and often over-looked; when your policy maker does follow through or if the action you desired passed, send a thank you via one of the methods of communication.