

California state senators and assembly members want to hear from their constituents – you – the voters in their districts. At times your association may call on you to do some grassroots lobbying. Often, the contact from a district constituent can sway a legislator's vote.

WHEN CONTACTING YOUR LEGISLATORS:

- Be thoughtful
- Be reasonable
- Be realistic
- Be accurate and factual
- Be understanding
- Be friendly
- Give credit where it is due
- Learn to evaluate issues
- Support your legislator
- Don't demand anything
- Don't be vague or deceptive
- Don't be an extremist
- Don't be a busybody
- Be cooperative

TIPS ON LETTER WRITING:

- Be brief.
- Make sure the legislator knows this communications is from a constituent who lives and/or does business in the legislator's district.
- Explain how the proposed legislation affects your business, and why you support/oppose it.
- Don't attempt to give "expert" opinions. Tell how the legislation would affect your business, based on your experience and knowledge.
- Refer to bill numbers whenever possible.
- Ask for the legislator's support or opposition.
- Write the letter without copying any association-provided background information verbatim.
- Request that your legislator take a specific action by telling him/her what you desire. State the facts as you see them. Avoid emotional arguments. If you use dollar figures, be realistic.
- Ask the legislator what his/her position is.
- Keep all communications friendly and respectful. Be sure to thank your legislator for considering your views.
- Write on your personal or business letterhead if possible, and sign your name over your typed signature at the end of your message.
- Be sure your exact return address is on the letter – not just the envelope. Envelopes sometimes get thrown away before the letter is answered.
- Be reasonable. Don't ask for the impossible. Don't threaten. Don't say, "I'll never vote for you unless you do such and such." That will not help your cause; it may even harm it.
- Be constructive. If a bill deals with a problem you admit exists, but you believe the bill is the wrong approach, tell what the right approach is.
- Send your association a copy of your letter and a copy of the response you receive from your legislator.
- Address all letters in the following manner, unless you are on a first name basis.
- Use the proper form of address. See examples below.

The Honorable John Doe
California State Senate
Sacramento, CA 94248-0001
Dear Senator Doe:

The Honorable Jane Doe
California State Assembly
Sacramento, Ca 94249-0001
Dear Assembly Member Doe:

TELEPHONE PROCEDURES:

- When the Legislature is in session, call the Capitol office; during recess and on Fridays, call the district office.
- Ask to speak directly to the legislator. If he/she is not available, ask to speak to the administrative assistant or legislative aide.
- When the legislator or his/her assistant is on the line, identify yourself and mention the name of your company and the fact that you are from the legislator's district.
- State the reason for the call. Use bill numbers whenever possible.
- Explain how the proposed legislation affects your business and why you support or oppose it.
- Discuss only one issue per telephone call.
- Ask the legislator's position – if the legislator's position is the same as yours, express agreement and thanks – if your position differs from the legislator's, politely express disappointment and offer some factual information supporting your views.
- Don't attempt to give "expert" opinions. Tell how legislation would affect your business, based on your experience and knowledge.
- Request that your legislator take a specific action by telling him/her what you desire. State the facts as you see them. Avoid emotional arguments. If you use dollar figures, be realistic.
- Keep all communication friendly and respectful.
- Thank the legislator or aide for his/her time and for considering your views.