

Basic Principles for Effective Communication

1. **Be brief.** Respect that a legislator's time is limited, as is yours.
2. **Be appreciative.** Acknowledge past support, and convey gratitude for current action.
3. **Be specific.** Know your issues and refer explicitly to proposed legislation (S. ___/ H. ___).
Ask directly for a certain action.
4. **Be informative.** Explain how proposed legislation will personally affect you, using specific examples and putting the issue in human terms as much as possible.
5. **Be courteous.** Be polite at all costs, even if you disagree with your legislator's position. Remember that you are building a relationship with him/her and want the communication lines to remain open.

Personal Visits

- ✦ **Face-to-Face discussion is the most effective means of communication.**
This type of visit will underscore the importance of the issue you wish to bring to his/her attention, and will allow you to have his/her full attention.
- ✦ **Constituents are always welcome in Montpelier and Washington D.C.**
Make sure to set a firm appointment prior to your visit. Get to know district staff members if your legislator is unavailable. Close working relationships with staff will benefit you in many ways.
- ✦ **Invite your legislators to your business.**
Conducting a tour of your business is a perfect way to get your local officials to better understand how your business operates. It also allows them to introduce themselves to your employees - likely voters within their districts. This type of visit enables you to convey your message in real and human terms.
- ✦ **Don't stay too long.**
Keep your visits short. Try not to take up more than 20 minutes meeting with him/her. Aim for closure within the first 10 minutes of your visit. Leave any informational materials in support of your issue. If you reach an impasse, thank him/her despite your disappointment. If nothing else, you have educated him/her on an important issue to you.
- ✦ **Follow-up is important.**
Be sure to send a thank you note after your visit. If commitments were made, repeat your understanding of them.

Telephone Calls

- ✦ **Once you have made the acquaintance of your legislator, telephone calls are appropriate and easy.**
Make them sparingly to your representative, whose time is heavily occupied. Regular contact with staff is often effective.
- ✦ **Telephone calls are especially appropriate when there is not enough time before a key vote.**
- ✦ **Visit Vermont's [online legislative directory](#) for local representatives' telephone numbers or call the State House (800) 322-5616.**

