



Advocacy Education Series: Making Effective Phone Calls

When time is short, a personal phone call to your legislator's office may be the most effective method to communicate your views. Often, calls are 'logged' as for or against a particular issue. Sometimes you may not get past the receptionist. Nonetheless, making a well-timed call can be particularly important. When combined with calls from your colleagues on the same issue, your call may tip the balance in your favor. Here are some tips for making an effective phone call to your legislator's office.

- **Ask for the legislative assistant who handles your issue** unless you know the legislator personally. If you can't reach a legislative staffer, leave a concise message.
- **Focus on a single issue**, making two or three key points in your phone call. Having talking points in front of you when you call can help you remain on message.
- **Localize the issue** to demonstrate the impact on the legislator's own constituents.
- **Clearly state the action** you want the legislator to take on the issue (vote for, vote against, offer an amendment, delete a provision, etc.).
- **Keep your call brief** – not more than three or four minutes.
- **Don't bluff** if you are asked a question you can't answer. Tell them you'll get the answer and get back to them.
- **Leave your name and telephone number** with the staff to whom you've spoken in case they have any questions later.
- **Write down the name of the legislative assistant** you spoke to and save it for reference. Next time, you can ask them by name and begin building a relationship. Staffers are more likely to listen to and return phone calls from people they know.
- **Send a thank you note!**

For additional guidance or questions, please contact Monica L. Reid, Senior Director of Advocacy, at mreid@nacdl.org.