

COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR LEGISLATOR

(Emails and Letters)

The most effective form of communication with legislators is a face-to-face personal visit, but often citizens will want to communicate by phone, email, or letter. This document focuses on effective communication via email and letters:

- **COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR OWN LEGISLATOR.** Every senator and representative is primarily interested in what their own constituents have to say and less interested in what others have to say. Occasionally there is a special reason for writing someone other than your legislator, for example, a chairman of a committee. You may communicate to any legislator, but you will have the greatest impact on those from your home district.
- **BE PERSONAL.** If writing a letter, use your own stationary or business letterhead. In all communications, make sure you take the time to spell the name of your legislator correctly.
- **BE FACTUAL AND LOCAL.** Avoid generalities and abstract statements. Don't state mere philosophical views – get to the facts. Don't assume that the legislator is well informed on the problem. Tell the legislator how the issue affects you and your local area. Give examples and anecdotes to illustrate your point.
- **ALWAYS BE COURTEOUS.** Never threaten. Leave the door open to more dialogue.
- **BE CLEAR AND CONCISE.** Don't be wordy. A brief email or one-page letter is best. Five page epistles will not be read.
- **COMMUNICATE AT THE RIGHT TIME.** Your email or letter will be more effective if it is received when your legislator is considering the bill; for example, when the bill is pending before a committee the legislator serves on.
- **ASK FOR A REPLY.** As their constituent, you are entitled to know your legislator's views and positions. Ask for it in a polite way and give them time to develop their view.
- **COMMUNICATE AGAIN.** Second emails or letters are twice as effective as initial communications. Ask for a clear statement of the legislator's position.

- DON'T ACCEPT "FORM RESPONSES". If you receive a "form letter" or standard email communication that fails to address your specific concerns, politely point out that fact to the legislator and request a more personal response.

FOR STATE OFFICIALS	FOR NATIONAL OFFICIALS
<p style="text-align: center;">Governor The Honorable Jay Nixon PO Box 720 Jefferson City, MO 65102</p> <p style="text-align: center;">E-message</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">President President Barack Obama The White House 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW Washington, DC 20500</p> <p style="text-align: center;">E-message</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">State Senator Senator (<i>full name</i>) 201 W Capitol Ave, Room (<i>room #</i>) Jefferson City, MO 65101</p> <p style="text-align: center;">To find your Senator click here.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">U.S. Senator Office of Senator (<i>full name</i>) United States Senate Washington, DC 20510</p> <p style="text-align: center;">U.S. Senator Roy Blunt (E-message) U.S. Senator Claire McCaskill (E-message)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">State Representative Representative (<i>full name</i>) 201 W Capitol Ave, Room (<i>room #</i>) Jefferson City, MO 65101</p> <p style="text-align: center;">To find your Representative click here.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">U.S. Representative Office of Representative (<i>full name</i>) U.S. House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515</p> <p style="text-align: center;">To find your U.S. Representative click here.</p>

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