

ADVOCATING BY PHONE, EMAIL OR IN-PERSON

Start communicating now! Make sure you don't wait until the session begins before expressing your ideas. It is not uncommon to begin talking about an issue in advance of the General Session. Legislator's contact information is available at www.le.state.ut.us; click on Legislators then Senator Roster/House Roster. **If lawmakers are to represent your wishes in the legislative process, they must hear from you.**

1. Phone. *Calling is an effective way to communicate when you must get your message across quickly. It's a good idea to have notes in front of you to be brief and concise. When calling your legislator:*

- Identify yourself and that you live in their District.
- Indicate the bill number/name or budget item you wish to talk about.
- Briefly state your position and how you would like your legislator to vote.
- Give one or more reasons for your position—it's always a good idea to speak from personal experience.
- Don't argue if your legislator has an opposing view or is undecided.
- If your legislator needs more information, provide it quickly.
- If your legislator is unavailable, leave a message.
- Follow up your phone call with a brief note of thanks for the conversation and a concise summary of your position.

2. Emails, Letters & Faxes. *Written communication is an important way to influence legislation. When writing to your legislator:*

- Use the correct salutation. For example, Dear Senator (name) or Dear Representative (name).
- Identify yourself and that you're constituent.
- State why you are writing. For example, "I'm writing to ask your support for..." or "I'm urging you to vote yes on HB000."
- Keep your message focused and brief. Choose a few bullet points to support your position. If possible, give an example of how the issue affects their District.
- Use your own words. Personal letters carry greater weight rather than form letters.
- Re-state how you would like your legislator to vote. Never use a negative, threatening or condescending tone.
- Offer to provide additional information or answer questions regarding your position.
- Include your name, return address and phone number. This is especially important when sending an email message.

3. In-Person. *Personal visits are a highly effective way to help legislators understand your position. Legislators welcome visits from constituents. They want you involved. However, they are busy people. If you make an appointment during General Session, there is no guarantee the legislator will be able to keep it. Legislative schedules change at moments notice. Don't take this personally; it is just "how it is." When meeting with your legislator:*

- Make an appointment in advance; plan on 15 minutes. Be on time, be prepared, be brief and be polite.
- Try to learn in advance where your legislator stands on the issue (find your legislator at www.vote-smart.org; click on voting record, issue positions or interest group ratings).
- Explain how the bill will affect children and their families, especially in the legislator's District.
- Have your facts straight. If your legislator needs more information than you have, offer to obtain it.
- At the end of the meeting, ask for your legislator's vote for your position. If your legislator opposes your position, find out why.
- Leave a one-page fact sheet with your legislator covering your key message. Write your name, address and phone number at the bottom.
- Before you leave, say, "Thank you" again.
- Follow up your visit with a thank you note.