



Making Your Case FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Teachers are expected to understand emerging standards and views of learning and to change their roles and practice accordingly. Additionally, teachers are required not only to study, implement, and assess learner outcomes outlined in local, state, and national educational standards but also to provide meaningful, engaged learning (cognitively, socially, and culturally) for a very diverse student population.

In working toward change, teachers need to be continually supported with professional development and need to understand how to advocate for their continued professional learning.

WHY SHOULD I CONTACT MY LEGISLATORS?

- **You have something to say.** You have an opinion to offer, a story to tell, a request to make, a question to ask.
- **Your letters and calls influence lawmakers.** More than the media, government information sources, lobbyist and many other forms of communication, voters influence elected officials. If mail is light on a given issue, your letter will be very significant. If mail is heavy, your letter may be very important to offset a different opinion.
- **Your pleas and stories can change attitudes and votes.** They can also support and reinforce favorable attitudes and views.

QUICK TIPS

- Make sure you **know who your legislators are.** If you are a constituent, tell him/her.
- If you want to leave a brief message, call the Legislative Hotline Number
- Be **specific, brief** and **polite.** Be willing and prepared to answer questions.

BRIEF YOURSELF ABOUT YOUR LEGISLATOR BY FINDING OUT

- General extent of the district.
- Committee assignments.
- Number of terms served.
- Professional background.
- Voting record on issues of interest to you.
- Views stated publicly on the above issues.

DEFINE THE OBJECTIVES OF YOUR VISIT

Is your objective to get acquainted, express general views or discuss specific issues? In regard to the latter:

- Limit the number of issues to be discussed.
- Brief yourself on the facts surrounding these issues.
- Outline your views and comments in a written summary.



TIPS FOR WRITING AND E-MAILING YOUR LEGISLATORS

- Be specific. Refer to the proposed legislation and give the bill number, if possible. If you want the legislator to vote “yes” or “no” -- say so.
- Don't use your work e-mail address. While you may be composing the e-mail on your lunch break and incurring no loss of government resources, legislators have no way of knowing that and are very sensitive about the use of state resources for lobbying. Your best foot forward is to use your own account.
- E-mail **your** representatives and senator only. Include your full name, address and phone number at the top, so legislative staffers know they're looking at mail from a constituent.
- Write the message in your own words. Explain how legislation would affect you personally.

CALLING LEGISLATORS THROUGH THE LEGISLATIVE HOTLINE

- Call on your own time - breaks, lunch time, before or after work or on weekends.
- Tell the operator your name, address, phone number, your message and the three legislators in your district.
- You can also leave messages for other legislators, like key committee chairs and members who are not in your district.

MAKING YOUR VOICE HEARD

If you want policy makers to represent your wishes in the policy making process, they need to hear from you. The fundamentals of contacting policy makers are reasonable, simple and easy to do. The following principles can be applied to **letters, phone calls** and **personal visits**:

- To visit, schedule an appointment. Be brief, prompt and to the point.
- Identify yourself and how you and other educators will be affected by what's being proposed such as a new law or an addition or cut in the budget.
- Be clear about what you want. Know the bill number that's being discussed and specifically what you want the policy-maker to do.
- Let them know what you agree and disagree with and why, and if possible, offer an alternative.
- Establish yourself as a resource. Let them know how to reach you for further information or help.
- Leave a written summary of your position, if available, along with a calling card and reference material.
- Ask for related legislative materials such as copies and analysis of bills.
- Attend legislator's town hall meetings

HOLD A DEBRIEFING

- Sit down with another person or the members of the group who made the visit and talk about it.
- Determine possible next steps.
- Inform others about who was learned.

SEND A FOLLOW-UP LETTER

- Express thanks for the visit or for the time shared during a phone call.
- Summarize what was said by all parties present.
- Reiterate the issues, positions and recommendations.
- Identify follow-up commitments made by you and the legislator.
- Express the intention to continue the dialogue.
- List the names, addresses and phone numbers of all participants in the visit.

HOW SHOULD I CONTACT THEM?

Addressing a letter to a senator

The Honorable (*Full Name*)
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable (*Full Name*)
NC Senate
Raleigh, NC 27699

Dear Senator (*Last Name*)

Addressing a letter to a representative

The Honorable (*Full Name*)
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable (*Full Name*)
NC House of Representatives
Raleigh, NC 27699

Dear Congressman or Congresswoman
(*Last Name*)

Telephone Numbers

U.S. Capitol Switchboard
(202) 224-3121

Senate and House Bill Status
(202) 225-1772

North Carolina General
Assembly Switchboard
(919) 733-4111

