

Tips for Contacting your Legislature

The ability to contact those who represent us in our state and federal governments is an integral part of the representative republic. Therefore, I want to provide some tips to get the most out of the process of contacting your legislators. These tips are specific to the state level and are from the perspective of the legislator who is receiving them!

First of all, I want to stress that we as your Representatives DO want to hear from you! Don't be alarmed if you don't hear from us right away: we often receive hundreds of emails each day and do our best to sort through and respond. In the same breath, don't be afraid to be persistent if you don't hear back!

Here are my top tips for contacting your state legislators:

1. Always identify yourself and where you're from

This is the most important part! Of all the opinions and perspectives that come across our desks each day, we are most concerned about those we know come from those who live in the district we represent. I suggest including your name and home address in the signature of your email. Including your phone number helps if the legislator prefers to call you back.

2. Be clear on what issue you are talking about

When emailing about a specific bill or issue, it is helpful to include a bill number and the title or a short summary! There are over 2,000 bills introduced each session and we simply cannot keep track of every number or topic.

3. Know your WHY

It is also helpful for us to see the reasoning behind your points. Feel free to include personal stories or experiences as you are comfortable.

4. Be courteous and respectful

We receive a lot of harsh communication, especially when controversial bills come forward. We welcome viewpoints that differ from ours, but a respectful discourse is always better for everyone involved!

5. Visit the Capitol or a local forum

If you are able, we always welcome visitors at the Capitol. If possible, send us an email in advance to let us know you are coming, and we can set up a time to meet. We also have forums in our districts throughout the session- check with your local Chamber of Commerce for this information. Meeting face to face is truly the best way to establish a connection with your legislators.

6. Leave a voicemail

You can call the Iowa Capitol switchboard anytime and leave a message for any Representative or Senator. You will not be able to talk directly with them through this switchboard, but when you leave a voicemail we get a notification and are able to listen to the recording. Be sure to include your phone number so we can call you back.

7. Identify committee assignments

When writing about a specific bill that is in a committee or subcommittee, you can contact those committee members and specifically the Chairperson, as they will guide the discussion in the subcommittee or committee meeting. Including sentences like “as the Chair of the Education committee, I hope you will consider my comments below,” helps to connect with them and their position.

8. Remember that we work for you

It is your right to contact those who represent you and make your voice heard. You don’t have to be an eloquent writer, a good public speaker, and you don’t have to know exactly what to say. Be confident and respectfully persistent. Be civil but don’t be afraid to speak truth.

All Iowa State Legislators contact information can be found at legis.iowa.gov under the “Legislators” tab. There is also a tool there to find who your Representative and Senator are based on your home address.

Letter to Legislators Example:

Dear Representative/Senator _____,

Thank you for leading and serving in Iowa.

I am writing today with my comments/concerns on House File/Senate File _____, the bill that proposes _____.

I support/oppose this bill because _____.

[Feel free to include personal stories, links to resources, helpful information, etc.]

Thank you for considering my comments/concerns.

Sincerely,

Your Name