

# CALLING DECISION MAKERS



One of the easiest ways to raise your voice and share your story with decision makers is by calling them. Elected officials, government agencies and companies all have publicly available phone numbers you can use. And for fast-developing campaigns or issues, calling can be the surest way to have your views heard before a decision is made.

Here are some simple steps to keep in mind when calling decision makers:

- 1. Identify yourself:** Be sure to share your name and where you are calling from. Use any titles or identifiers that connect you with a larger group (Reverend, Chair of Church and Society Committee, etc.). This will register you as a constituent and as someone who is part of a broader network.
- 2. Share the reason you are calling:** In addition to identifying yourself and any relevant affiliations, state clearly why you are calling. “I’m concerned about access to health care” or “I’m calling to ask (company name) to join the Fair Food Program.”
- 3. Ask to speak to the person working on the issue:** While most times you will leave a message with either the receptionist or the staff-person’s voicemail, you might be surprised how often you can connect directly with the staff handling the issue. And once you know the name of the staff person, you can ask for them directly the next time you call.
- 4. Share your story:** Whether you are connected to a live person or a voice mailbox, explain clearly and succinctly why you care about this issue, how it impacts you or your community and any other personal connections you have.
- 5. Make your “ask”:** Be clear about what you want the decision maker to do. For elected officials this might be asking them to co-sponsor legislation or vote a particular way on an upcoming bill or amendment. For companies you might be asking them to improve their business practices or meet with concerned workers.
- 6. Thank them and request a response or follow-up:** Once you have shared your opinion be sure to thank them and either ask for a response or inquire about when you might follow up with another call. This signals your interest in staying engaged and that you will be following their decision.

One way to increase your impact is to coordinate a call-in day. Rather than a trickle of individual calls, a coordinated burst of calls on the same day can amplify your message. You can bring the information to a meeting of your ministry team or weekly supper club and take five minutes while you are all together to have your friends and colleagues pull out their phones and register their opinions.

Many first-time callers are unsure of how to express their concerns to their decision makers. A sample script using the steps above can be found on the next page.

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Below is an example of a call to a Member of Congress. Note what this caller does well: identifies himself as a constituent, quickly identifies the reason for the call including what motivated him to call, and closes the call with a note of thanks and request for a response.

Hi, my name is Marc Wilson from Oklahoma City and I'm calling to discuss the Senator's position on climate change.

I am a Sunday School teacher at First United Methodist Church and I am concerned about the protection of God's good creation and the impacts of climate change on communities around the world, including right here in Oklahoma. Our church has been taking action to reduce our emissions and switch to clean energy and I am wondering what the Senator is doing to address this urgent challenge? (Pause for response)

As a resident of Oklahoma, I am asking the Senator to support efforts to reduce pollution from our power plants, shift to cleaner and healthier sources of energy, and support communities as they adapt to the realities of climate change.

Thank you for sharing my views with the Senator and I look forward to hearing his response. My address is 123 Main Street, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 73008.



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