

LEGISLATIVE GUIDE

Contacting your legislators? Fantastic!

Please keep in mind that our legislators perceive a correlation between the amount of effort you put into personal communication and how likely you are to remember the legislator's response at election time—that is, a personal letter sent via "snail-mail" speaks louder than an e-mail message.

Sending an e-mail **is** far better than not contacting your legislator at all; however, by writing a **letter** you will be making more of an impact and are almost guaranteed to receive a response. The more individualized your letter is, the bigger impact you'll make. You are far more likely to persuade your legislator by being **courteous** and **respectful**.

Lastly, if your legislator gives you the desired response to your request (e.g. cosponsors a bill, votes against a harmful amendment, etc.), be sure to write him/her a **thank you letter**. Positive reinforcement goes a long way.

LETTERS TO OUR LEGISLATORS

While everyone's good at complaining about politics to their friends, **too few** citizens express their opinions to those who can do something about it: **legislators**. Constituent input really does make a difference.

If you don't communicate with the officials representing you, who will? Although MoSALPN has a legal representation at the State Capitol, it means much more for the legislators to hear from voters in their own districts. Many legislators share your objectives and just need to be convinced that there is sufficient public support before putting their necks on the line.

HERES HOW TO MAKE YOUR VOICE COUNT:

Find out who your federal and state representatives are. To get the names of your U.S. senators and representative, call the congressional switchboard at **(202) 224-3121**. Give the operator your zip code, and he or she will give you the names of your legislators to use with the following addresses:

Senators - The Honorable (name), U.S. Senate, Washington, DC 20510.
Representatives - The Honorable (name), U.S. House of Representatives,
Washington, DC 20515.

Keep letters brief - no more than one page. If you're writing about a specific bill, mention the bill's name and number, if you know it, and whether you support or oppose it in the first paragraph. Include reasons and supporting data in the next paragraph or two. Conclude by asking for a response.

Focus on a specific topic - Don't ask the legislator just to "*support nurses*"; very few legislators vote in favor of all nursing related bills because different issues are at stake with each one.

Be polite and concise - Keep everything relevant to the bill or issue in question. Never be threatening or insulting. Remember: Each letter pertaining to a particular piece of legislation is usually counted as a "yes" or "no." Don't get overwhelmed by the project. Just get those letters written and in the mail! As few as 10 letters on any one topic can sway a legislator's vote. Several hours of letter-writing every month can make a big impact. And don't be discouraged if you receive unfavorable responses; the more we communicate with public officials, the sooner they'll change their positions.

GENERAL ELECTION

General elections are held the 1st Tuesday in August and November. Information on voting in Missouri can be found on the Secretary of State website.