



BUILDING BETTER LIVES

How to Contact Your State Legislators



Go to www.elections.il.gov

*Provided by Voices for Illinois Children
For more information, contact Kelley Talbot at Ktalbot@voices4kids.org or
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Identifying your State Legislator

You can learn who your legislators are by visiting the Illinois State Board of Elections at www.elections.il.gov/DistrictLocator/DistrictOfficialSearchByAddress.aspx.

You can find contact and other information by visiting the Illinois General Assembly's website at www.ilga.gov or by searching for a legislator's website online.

Contacting your State Legislator by Phone

You can call your legislator either at their district office or, during the legislative session, at their Springfield office. The Springfield office switchboard can be reached at 217-782-2000. You will most likely speak to a legislative aide rather than the legislator, but rest assured that officials take your input seriously.

Tips for an effective phone call

- Introduce yourself by name and identify yourself as a constituent. Provide your address and telephone number if it is requested. If you are calling about a specific piece of legislation, identify it by name and bill number.
- If your legislator has supported your cause in the past, show your appreciation.
- Briefly explain your position and how you would like your legislator to vote.
- Remember to always be courteous and respectful.
- If additional information is requested, take care to provide it as quickly as possible.
- Keep track of your legislator's actions and follow up with a letter expressing thanks or disappointment. You can check the status of a bill at www.ilga.gov.

Visiting your State Legislator

Taking the time to personally visit your legislator demonstrates your commitment to an issue. You can visit their district office or, during the legislative session, you may be able to meet them at the Capitol in Springfield. (Visiting in Springfield, however, can be very difficult, and meetings at the Capitol are often cancelled or delayed.)

Before the visit

- Learn basic information about your legislator. Find this at www.ilga.gov or the legislator's own website.
- Preparing bullet-pointed, written statements to leave behind is often useful.
- Call ahead to make an appointment. Be as flexible as possible – legislators' schedules are extremely busy.
- If you are visiting in Springfield and are unable to meet your legislator in their office, you may be able to call them off the House or Senate floor when they're in session. Go to the third floor outside the appropriate chamber and hand a card listing your name and organization to the doorman. Your legislator may be able to come out and speak for a few moments in between votes. If you choose this route, be prepared to wait for a while after you hand in your card.

During your visit

- Introduce yourself. Identify yourself as a constituent and point out any connection you may share with your legislator, such as a common school.
- If your legislator has supported your cause in the past, show your appreciation.
- Present your written statement. Be concise. And be clear about what you want your legislator to do. Identify the bill number. Try to get a specific commitment.
- Be courteous and respectful. Don't take it personally if your visit is brief.

After the visit

- Report your experiences to others working on your issue.
- Send a brief thank-you note to the legislator for their time.
- Keep track of your legislator's actions and follow up with a letter expressing thanks or disappointment. You can check the status of a bill at www.ilga.gov.

Contacting your State Legislator by Letter or Email

One of the best ways to influence the legislative process is by writing or emailing your legislator. Address a letter as:

The Honorable John Doe
State Representative/ State Senator
Address

Dear Senator/Representative Doe:

Tips for effective writing

- Include your address and sign your name legibly. (Your legislator will want to make sure you're a constituent)
- Use your own words. If possible, give an example of ways the relevant legislation will impact you personally.
- Make your position clear and state what you would like your legislator to do.
- Be brief and to the point. Identify a bill by number and title.
- Form letters or postcards are not as effective as an original letter.
- Be courteous. Even if you disagree, never be angry, threatening or rude.
- Ask the legislator to reply and explain his or her position on the issue.

After you send your letter

Keep track of how your legislator votes. You can check their votes at www.ilga.gov. Follow up with a thank you note or a letter expressing disappointment depending on how he or she votes.

Remember to contact your legislator in support of their actions when appropriate. Often, legislators only hear from individuals and organizations opposed to legislation. It is refreshing for them to receive positive messages from the constituents they are working to represent.