

Effectively contacting your legislator

Legislators appreciate hearing from their constituents. They are elected to represent YOUR views.

Identify yourself as a constituent.

Legislators and their staff are much more receptive once they know they're talking to a constituent. Make it clear that you live in their district by sharing your name and address.

Who represents the area where you live?

Minnesota state representatives and senators represent distinct groups of people and primarily devote their energy to the requests and needs of those individuals. Every Minnesotan has 1 representative and 1 senator who represents the area in which they live. In general, someone should stick to contacting their own representative and senators, unless they serve on a specific committee or commission.

Taking Action

The actions listed below are both important and impactful. Different actions have different levels of strength and effectiveness, typically following an escalation pattern as described below. When considering actions to take someone could move from left to right and escalate their actions or choose the best option available.

Examples:

- Multiple escalating actions: Sign a group petition first, write an email to their senator 2nd and 3rd participate in an Education Minnesota Issue Lobby day to meet face to face with legislators.
- One action: Attend your local's lobby day

Lower impact	➡	➡	➡	➡	Higher Impact
Action	Action	Action	Action	Action	Action
Group: Signing a petition	Individual: Email using template	Individual: Personalized Email	Individual: Phone call or Virtual Meeting	Group: Virtual Lobby Day/Meeting	Group: In-Person Lobby Day/Meeting: Group/1:1
Rationale	Rationale	Rationale	Rationale	Rationale	Rationale
Low relational, large numbers and effective to get initial attention of decision makers; vital to include addresses	Copy and paste a shared "contact your legislator" email/letter; Easiest written action and it will be clear when many contacts are the same	Writing your own email/letter to share your thoughts on the issue really personalizes the contact	Better relationship building opportunity and you're able to ask their position, answer questions and ask for support	More people to share stories, information and insight. Demonstrates solidarity and the power of your union	Increases the relationship aspect and accountability that comes with being in-person

Large group rallies are also successful when strategic, well planned and with strong numbers.



Tips when contacting your legislator

General Tips

- Contact your own legislative district's legislators [[Find them here](#)]
- Be specific
- Use time wisely and plan out your remarks
- Tell the truth and be accurate
- Establish credibility by sharing your position in a courteous, factual and straightforward manner
- Let them know you're an educator, Education Minnesota member, and/or have kids in public schools
- Ask for concrete action and solicit support from your legislator
- Start early to build relationships with legislators
- Thank them for their time and follow up with a thank you note

Written Contact

- Clearly state that you are a constituent in the opening (if you are one). Share your name and address
- Before writing, have a thorough understanding of the issue
- Identify the issue at the beginning of your email/letter
- Be short, succinct, and thorough. Reference a specific bill number whenever possible
- Clearly ask for legislators' support and give specific examples of how the legislation might affect you and your community.
- Remember you are the expert, identify yourself and provide the background for your expertise
- If you want a reply, specifically ask for one in the closing, "I would love to hear from you" works well

Asking for a meeting

- Contact your legislator's Assistant (listed on their [House](#) or [Senate](#) webpage)
- Include:
 - Your name, constituent address, and phone number
 - Subject matter that you'd like to talk about
 - At least three available time frames on your calendar, a week or so out
 - Whether you prefer Zoom, in district, or in person, and how long you'd like the meeting to be (15-30 minutes is typical for a 1-on-1)

In-person/Virtual/Phone Contact

- Identify who you are (constituent), that you're an Education Minnesota member and thank the legislator for taking the time. Tell a little about your job and the students you serve but keep it brief.
- State your purpose and what legislation you are supporting or opposing. Reference a specific bill number whenever possible
- Let the legislator know your position and why you are asking them to vote for that position.
- Give them a chance to share their perspective on your issue, listen and ask questions
- Be respectful and remember legislators may disagree with you but courtesy goes a long way when expressing your views
- Let them know you and Education Minnesota can be a resource to them
- Ask for concrete action
- Let them know you plan to stay in touch