

# Tips for Effectively Communicating with Legislators



Local leaders have always played a crucial role in explaining to state legislators how the actions they take at the General Assembly affect Virginia's communities. It's important that your communications with legislators - whether in person, on the phone, or in writing - are clear, concise, and targeted to the issues most affecting your locality.

## Written communications

A well-written letter or email is one of the best ways to introduce yourself and make your legislators aware of your thoughts and opinions about a particular issue. Here are some tips for getting your message across effectively:

- **Be brief.** Legislators have many demands on their time. They appreciate communications that are short and to the point.
- **Put the message in your own words.** Group emails, form letters and petitions don't have the same impact as personal, informed opinions.
- **Address your message to a specific legislator or legislators.** Depending on your message, you may want to write to the sponsor of a bill, certain members of a committee, or your own legislators. Don't address your message to the entire legislature.
- **Give any sources of information** that you use to make your point.
- **Include your contact information** so they have a way to respond.
- **After legislation is introduced:**
  - **Identify bills** by their number, title, and sponsor.
  - **Explain your position** on the bill and ask for the legislator's support or opposition.

Outside of a legislative session, the legislative branch *does not* maintain staff or facilities through which constituents may contact their legislators. Instead, constituents may contact legislators directly through any of the means listed on their individual webpages.

Scan the QR codes below to access the member lists and click on a legislator's name to view their contact information.

### Senate of Virginia



### Virginia House of Delegates



**NOTICE:** Legislators are publicly elected officials. Communications with legislators involving legislative business may be considered a "public record" pursuant to Virginia law. As such, email sent or received, its sender and receiver, and the email's contents and attachments, may be subject to public disclosure, except as otherwise provided by Virginia law.

## In person

When meeting with senators or delegates:

- **Be brief.** A short conversation is all that is needed to make a big impression.
- **Have the bill numbers.** Being able to reference specific legislation keeps the conversation on track.
- **Explain your concern.** It's not enough to say you like or dislike a particular piece of legislation. You should be prepared to say why.
- **Have a specific ask:** This is your chance to make sure they understand that you're not asking for something they *should* do, you're asking for something they *must* do.
- **Reference your locality.** Be sure to remind the legislator that you represent or work for their constituents from a particular town, city, or county. An invitation to visit is always a great way to make this point.
- **Have a business card ready.** You may need to leave it with their assistant. Write the bill number that you want to discuss on the back.
- **Follow up as soon as possible.** A well-written letter or email is one of the best ways to thank your legislator for meeting with you and to remind them of your thoughts and opinions about a particular issue.

## VML is your resource. Use it!

VML is available throughout the year to help with your locality's legislative needs. For assistance with developing a legislative agenda, crafting draft legislation, building key talking points, or other issues, contact your VML lobbying team.

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