



HOW TO EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR STATE LEGISLATOR

FIND YOUR STATE LEGISLATOR:

To find your state legislator's phone number, you may use MSSNY's searchable online state legislature directory (www.mssny.org) or call the New York State Legislature: Senate at (518) 455-2800/Assembly at (518) 455-4100 and ask for your Senator's and/or Assembly person's office. Keep in mind that most state legislatures are only in session part-time. Often the members are back home so try to get the number for legislator's district office. Increasingly e-mail is the preferred method of communication with legislators

SPEAKING WITH LEGISLATIVE STAFF:

Telephone calls are often taken by a staff member and not the actual legislative member. In most cases this is perfectly acceptable. Ask to speak with the aide who handles the issue on which you wish to comment. If unavailable, you may leave a message. If you speak with someone other than your legislator, take down their name and title.

FOUR BASIC STEPS TO EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATE YOUR MESSAGE:

Anytime you communicate with your state legislator or his/her staff, follow these four basic steps:

- 1) **IDENTIFY** yourself by name and the organization (if any) that you represent and/or the town in which you live or practice.
- 2) **EXPLAIN** what your message is: "I am calling to support/oppose Assembly bill A: ___/Senate bill S: ___." Be polite and concise. Creating 1 or 2 talking points will focus the content of your message. Too much information may confuse your message. Ask your legislator his/her position on this issue. Don't assume that your legislator has prior knowledge of your issue. Be calm, respectful, and be prepared to educate, using local examples to accentuate your point. Never threaten.
- 3) **REQUEST** a written follow-up response from your legislative representative if you did not speak directly to your legislative member. If the legislator requires further information, provide it as soon as possible.
- 4) **THANK** the person you spoke to for their time and consideration and tell them that you will be contacting them in the next few weeks to follow-up on your conversation.



TIPS ON COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATOR

Every elected official; your Congressman, your Assembly member, and your state Senator is ultimately responsible to only one group of people- their constituents. Nothing is more powerful or important than letting your elected representatives know what you desire and expect from them. They need to hear from you, or they may not understand the physician's perspective on an important issue.

COMMUNICATION IS EASY!



There are a number of ways in which you can quickly and effectively transmit your thoughts and position on an issue. You can call and ask to speak to the Member. Do not be surprised if he or she is not available. That's all right. Feel free to leave a message with the staff member. It will be promptly conveyed. Better yet, send a letter. It shows

that you care enough about an issue to take time to put word to paper. The methods of transmitting a letter are varied. You can mail it, fax it, e-mail it, or drop it off personally. MSSNY's Grassroots Action Center provides direct electronic access to your representatives as well as sample letters on topical health care issues.

Even better, make an appointment to see your lawmaker. It is best, and more convenient for you, to meet in the district, where the lawmaker is not pre-occupied with legislative sessions, committee meetings, public hearings and other official duties. This will allow you 15-30 minutes of private "face" time with the lawmaker which will enhance the message you are conveying.

In whichever type of communication you are making (phone, letter or personal), there are certain hints and rules which you can follow to make your message more effective:

- Keep your communication to one, or maybe two, points-any more than that will dilute your effectiveness and decrease the chance that any of your points will be remembered.
- Make the message as personal as possible-relate real experiences preferably with a "District" flavor that you have had or which you know of from colleagues, not hypothetical stories.
- After a personal meeting or phone call, follow up with a short thank you note, whether or not you achieved your goal-remember, you will be back again one day to ask for something else. After a letter, follow up with a quick call to the office.
- Make sure you have the necessary background information to speak about chosen issue intelligently- you can refer to information posted on the MSSNY web site (www.mssny.org), or contact the Division of Governmental Affairs for more background information at (518) 465-8085. We are here to help you.