



Maine Women's Lobby

THE VOICE OF MAINE WOMEN



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HOW TO LOBBY YOUR LEGISLATOR

Tools for Effective Letter Writing

Writing a letter to your local legislator can be just as effective, and sometimes more effective, than a phone call. Always be polite when contacting a legislator so you don't 'burn any bridges'. Here are some tips to writing a good letter that gets your message out.

Mail your letter to your legislator's State House address when the Legislature is in session. (Also see below: Emailing your legislators.) S/he will be sure to receive it in a timely fashion. Letters should be addressed as follows:

For Representatives:

Representative John Jones
Maine House of Representatives
State House Station #2
Augusta, ME 04333

For Senators:

Senator Susan Smith
Maine State Senate
State House Station #3
Augusta, ME 04333

State the reason you are writing immediately. Try to give her/him as much information about the bill—and your opinion about it—in the first paragraph. If possible, state the name of the bill, the L.D. number, the Committee to which the bill has been referred for public hearing and the status of the bill (when, for example, it was held for public hearing). Here's a sample first paragraph:

Dear Representative Jones:

I am writing to urge your support of L.D. 2214. An Act to Ensure Safety For Maine Workers, which was presented for public hearing before the Legislature's Labor Committee last Tuesday, February 10.

Give a little background about yourself. Tell her/him why you are interested in this bill. Explain, in your own words, why the bill is important to you and how it will affect you and other citizens like you. If possible, give a brief anecdote from personal experience that conveys how the bill will correct (or create) problems for you and other Maine people.

(OVER)

Be short and to the point! A single page letter that gets your point across in a clear, concise and direct way is most effective. Legislators get lots of letters, so they will appreciate—and remember—those that get to the point fast (3-4 paragraphs are sufficient). Letters don't have to be typewritten: neatly handwritten ones are just as effective.

Be sure to provide your name and address on the letter. Envelopes can get lost—along with your return address—so be sure to include your address and phone number(s) under your signature. This will ensure your legislator has an opportunity to get back to you. Also, it will let him/her know that you live—and vote—in her/his district.

Try to follow up your letter with a phone call. Though you can try to reach the legislator at home during the weekend, it's often more effective to give a quick call to the State House if only to leave her/him a message. The message can simply confirm her/his receipt of the letter. Tell the receptionist: "I'm calling Rep. Jones to make sure that he received my letter concerning L.D. 2214, An Act to Ensure Safety for Maine Workers." Be sure to leave your name and the phone number(s) where you can be reached during the day and evening. Legislators can be reached at the following toll-free State House phone numbers:

Representatives:

1-800-423-2900

Senators:

1-800-423-6900

If you don't receive some acknowledgement of your letter and/or call within 2 to 3 days, don't be shy, write or call again until you do.

Send a "Quick Hit" post card as a final reminder. If you know when the bill is scheduled for a vote on the floor of the Legislature, send a quick post card as a final reminder of your support (or opposition) to the bill. Again, state your position and the L.D. number and the title, if possible. This will let your legislator know her/his vote is still important to you.

Emailing a letter to Legislators. To find the email addresses for your legislators, go to <http://www.maine.gov/legis/>

How to find your legislators:

Go to <http://www.congress.org/>

After you type in your zip code, you will get a list of federal and state elected officials for your area.