

Power (to the People) Lunch

Tips for Calling Elected Officials

1. **Be polite and friendly.**
2. **Stick to policy or other action requests.** Anger and emotion don't aid communication and won't be recorded, unless expressed in terms of what policies and legislation you are for or against. Remember, you will generally be speaking to staff people who are answering lots of calls.
3. **Brevity is appreciated by the staff people** taking your call or recording your message. In general, your call will be recorded as simply 'for' or 'against' no matter how brilliantly you make your case. It is good to go through the steps below, and to add one sentence about why you are for or against what you are calling about, but keep brevity in mind.
4. **When calling a Member of Congress (MoC), especially our own, call both the DC and the district office.** When trying to impact an upcoming bill, it's best to start with DC office because that's where the legislative staff works.
5. **When calling a MoC, if you get through, ask to speak to the staff person in charge of the issue you're calling about.** If that person isn't there, ask whether there's another staff person you can talk to or to leave a voicemail. When you reach that person or their VM, give your name say you are a constituent or a concerned citizen (they may ask for your zip code). If you reach a staff person, address them by name and thank them for taking the time to speak with you.
6. If you speak with a staff person, and it feels right, **ask what the elected officials' position is on the topic.** Even if you think you know, asking is a good way to start the discussion (note: does not apply for bill co-sponsors). If the elected official is not voting the way you believe they should, tell them how you would like them to vote and why; or, if they are, thank them for voting the right way. **For example:**

YOU: *Can you tell me if Sen. Feinstein will be voting against Scott Pruitt's confirmation as EPA Secretary?*

Alternative 1: STAFF: *She has not decided yet/ OR She will be voting to confirm.*

YOU: *Please let Sen. Feinstein know I am counting on her to oppose his nomination because he does not believe in the mission of the EPA and has a history of fighting environmental regulations in Oklahoma.*

OR

Alternative 2: STAFF: *Yes, she will be voting against his confirmation.*

YOU: *That's great to hear! Please thank her and tell her we're counting on her to keep defending the EPA and standing up for clean air and water.*
7. **When calling a MoC, or other elected official, raise only one issue per call;** only one gets recorded.
8. **When calling an agency, the media or other company, ask the person who answers the call who you can talk to about your topic.** Be persistent. Proceed as above.

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Below is a **sample of a VM message**. The fourth line can be cut, or personalized.

Hi, my name is ____ and I'm a concerned citizen from rural California [OR constituent from your district]. I don't need a call back. I'm calling to express my opposition to HR 861 and any legislation which reduces the authority of the Environmental Protection Agency. The EPA was formed in the 1970's because our air was so polluted we couldn't see New York's skyline, our rivers were brown, and far too many were dying from cancer. I urge Sen. ____ to vote against HR 861. Thanks for taking my message.

Below is a **sample of a script for talking with a staff person** for an elected official. The third line can be cut, or personalized.

Hi, my name is ____ and I'm a concerned citizen from rural California [OR constituent from your district]. I'm calling to let Congressman ____ know that I am opposed to HR 861 and any legislation which reduces the authority of the Environmental Protection Agency. The EPA was formed in the 1970's because our air was so polluted we couldn't see New York's skyline, our rivers were brown, and far too many of us were dying from cancer. I urge the Congressman to vote against HR 861. Thanks for speaking with me.

(These 'tips' are courtesy of Elizabeth Conner, former legislative staff for Boston City Council, lobbyist for Massachusetts Tenants Organization, and Arcata City Council Member) 4/22/17



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