



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF DOOR COUNTY

P. O. Box 306 • Sturgeon Bay, WI 54235-0306

leagueofwomenvotersdoorcounty.org

Tips for communicating with elected officials Communication isn't just about sending out a media release, making a phone call, or sending an email. It's about all of that and more. As important as what you do, how you do it will make a huge difference. Here are some quick tips on how best to be heard.

Foster positive working relationships with elected officials, their staffs

- Contact elected officials and their staffs on a consistent basis, not just during budget cycles.
- Develop and nurture relationships all year.
- Make personal contacts with elected officials, whether it's in-person visits, phone calls, handwritten notes, typed letters, or emails. These are more effective than simply forwarding mass emails. Localize the issue.
- Use respectful forms of communication that focus on improvement and solutions.
- Get to know staff members and aides. They are valuable contacts and have a great deal of influence on decisions.
- Schedules can be hectic and very tight. Respect the time of your elected officials, and they may respect your position. Get to the point. Be concise, specific, and clear in all communications.

Write to elected officials

- Keep your message brief. Identify yourself and the issue. Limit your letter to one page and one issue. Indicate what action you would like him/her to take: "I am writing to ask you to support regional transit in Wisconsin by voting yes on SB822."
- Personalize your message. Provide one or two reasons why you are making a request.
- Express your appreciation for their service and their past or future support.
- Close your letter by restating your request and indicating that you look forward to hearing from the elected official regarding his/her position on the issue.
- Include your full name and address. Be easily identified as a constituent. Remember that elected officials are most concerned with the views of their voters.
- Proofread carefully.

Send an email that will get noticed

In our technology-driven society, email is cost effective, popular, and a quick way to share personal views. This means that elected officials receive a high number of emails, so you want to be certain that yours will be noticed. Remember to include the bill number in the subject line so that your message will get proper consideration.

Make an effective phone call

- Know what you want to say before you call. A staff person will most likely answer calls to state and national officials, and it is key to be prepared to leave a specific message.
- Identify yourself as a constituent and tell which bill or issue you are calling about. He/she may direct you to a staff person who handles that particular issue.
- Tell the staff person you would like to leave a message for your elected official to support/oppose a specific piece of legislation. Include the bill number or resolution: "Please tell Senator Brown I support SB825."
- Thank the staff person for his/her time. Make a note of the person's name for future reference.

Meet in person with elected officials

- Make an appointment by requesting a time to meet or speak, if possible, in the district office.
- Let the scheduler know you are a constituent and what issue or specific legislation you wish to discuss.
- Depending on the legislator's availability, you may meet with a staff member instead. This is not unusual. It is impossible for legislators to follow all issues, and the staff will relay your concerns. Staff members can sometimes be the real driving force on an issue.
- Keep your meeting short and simple. Say why you've come and succinctly outline your position on the legislation or issues that prompted the meeting. Stay focused on two or three key messages you want to leave with the legislator.
- Give examples of how the issue affects you and other constituents.
- Be prepared to ask for the elected official's support or opposition of a specific issue or piece of legislation.
- Thank them for their time. If you meet with a staff person, indicate that you look forward to a response from the elected official.
- Leave behind a one-page position paper on your issues. Include your name and telephone number.
- Send a note, thanking the legislator and briefly restating your issue.

Send elected officials good news

- Place elected officials on mailing lists for newsletters, annual reports, and special events. They want to hear from constituents in good times and in bad.
- Call or visit elected officials periodically. Share positive outcomes.

Invite elected officials to events

- Designate elected officials as "honorary guests" at high-profile special events.
- Incorporate them in ceremonies, such as handing out awards, speaking, etc.
- Invite the media and inform officials that the media are invited.

Write a letter to the editor

Decision-makers monitor this section of the newspaper to gauge opinion on issues. Keep the letter short and focused. A concise, single-issue letter has a better chance of retaining its significant points and maintaining a reader's interest.

FYI Contact information for those who represent us:

President Donald J. Trump president@whitehouse.gov <https://www.facebook.com/WhiteHouse/> (202) 456-1111

U.S. Senator WI: Ron Johnson <https://www.ronjohnson.senate.gov/public/> (202) 224-5323

U.S. Senator WI: Tammy Baldwin <https://www.baldwin.senate.gov/> (202) 224-5653

U.S. House 8th Congressional District: Mike Gallagher <https://gallagher.house.gov> (202) 225-5665

Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker <http://walker.wi.gov/contact-us> (608) 266-1212

WI Senate District 1: Frank Lasee Sen.Lasee@legis.wisconsin.gov (608) 266 3512

WI Assembly District 1: Joel Kitchens Rep.Kitchens@legis.wisconsin.gov (608) 266-5350

One complimentary copy of the official Directory of Door County (a listing of contact information for county, city, village and town officials) can be picked up at the County Clerk's office at the Door County government building. This directory is also online at the Door County government website: <http://www.co.door.wi.gov/index.asp>