

10 tips for contacting legislators

1. Find out who your legislator is. You can do this at www.legis.state.wi.us under the “Who represents me?” link.
2. Do your homework. Find out what bill number corresponds to your legislation of interest. Again, this can be found at www.legis.state.wi.us in the searchable infobase. Also, find out where your legislation is in the process. For example, if it has already been passed or “killed”, nothing will be done with it until the next session. Along with that, if your bill has already passed the Assembly and moved to the Senate, writing to your Senator makes more sense than writing to your Representative.
3. Make sure to include your voting address in any correspondence with your legislator. Politicians are interested in the opinions of people who elect them, so make sure to let them know you are one of their constituents, and confirm this by providing your address.
4. Watch your tone and language. Politicians are people, too, and attacking them is not likely to make them see your point of view and want to do what you’d like. By all means, be firm and passionate, but do not use language that is degrading. Avoid words like “dumb”, “stupid”, “sucks”, or anything else that might belong on a middle school playground. If you present your opinion in a thoughtful, mature manner, you are likely to be taken seriously.
5. If you have a personal connection to the issue, share it! Facts are great and can always be included, but personal stories are what stick in the minds of legislators and make an impact.
6. Rally others to join you in your efforts. It can take just a couple of minutes to contact a legislator, and every communication helps. You can help others out by creating a “form email” that they can personalize and send.
7. If you want to make an impact beyond writing a letter, try a personal visit. This isn’t just for people that live in the Madison area. Legislators return to their home districts to meet with their constituents on a regular basis. Just email them (Sen.Lastname@legis.state.wi.us or Rep.Lastname@legis.state.wi.us) and request a meeting in the district—piece of cake!
8. It can help if you familiarize yourself with the legislator’s past activities. Perhaps they voted for a bill similar to this one in the past—that could help you make your case. Even if they opposed similar legislation, demonstrating that knowledge may make them take you more seriously.

9. Use more than one method of communication. For example, you can call, write a letter, write an email, and visit with the legislator, all on one issue! That's the way to make a point!
10. Be confident in your approach. Remember that legislators are elected and it is their duty to serve the public that put them in their position. They WANT to hear from their constituents. Their job is to represent you, and they can't do their job if you don't tell them about what's important to you.

Good luck!