



## Call

[www.parentsunited.org](http://www.parentsunited.org)

Politicians and decision-makers take notice when constituents make the effort to call and share their views on particular issues.

**Nine phone calls to a legislator means an issue is hot.**

Telephone calls are often taken by a staff member and not the actual legislator. Ask to speak with the aide who handles education issues. If they are not available, you may also leave a message. If you speak with someone other than your legislator, take down his or her name and title.

Upon reaching your state legislator on the phone, follow these four basic steps:

1. **Identify yourself** by name and organization (if any). Point out that you are a constituent (if appropriate) and provide your address.
2. **Explain why you are calling.** If you are calling about a general concern, describe what you are calling about, and what action you would like to see taken. If you are calling about a specific bills, clearly state "I am calling to support/oppose House File: HF\_\_\_\_\_ (or Senate File: SF\_\_\_\_\_)." Be polite and concise. Create just one or two talking points to focus your message. Too much information may confuse your message. Ask your legislator for 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.
3. **Request a written response** to your call if you feel strongly about the issue and did not speak to your legislative member. If the legislator requires further information, provide it as soon as possible.
4. **Thank** the person who took the phone call for their time and consideration.

To find your legislator, use the Legislative District Finder at <http://maps.commissions.leg.state.mn.us/website/districts/> or call the State Information and Referral Service at (651) 296-6013.

### Do's and Don'ts of Calling Legislators

- DON'T insist on a call back unless it's really necessary.
- If you are a constituent, DO give your address and phone number. The legislator may respond by mail.
- DO personalize your message by telling a story (briefly!) about your children's school that speaks to the local impacts of the issue you raise.
- When calling a committee member, DO point out that by virtue of their role on the committee they represent ALL Minnesota children.

### Additional Ideas

- Consider setting up a conference call to the legislator with 3-4 friends or fellow constituents.
- Start a "telephone tree." Call five friends and ask them to call the legislator; each calls five more friends to call five more friends, etc.
- Flood the phone banks. Is there an important day others are calling? Be part of the building the momentum by calling too!

### A Special Note About Phone Tallies

Legislative offices maintain "Phone Tallies," a record of how many calls they receive "for" or "against" a bill or position. A tally sheet might look like this:

Public Education Funding	For	Against
	////	////

Your call gets noted as a slash mark on the tally sheet and the message goes into a file.

Why is this important? Because legislators pay attention to tally sheets!

Call your legislator's office no more than once a week and only when you have something new to say. Take your Key Messages and speak to one each call. That will get you through several weeks, perhaps to the end of the session!

Have fun with this, but keep your messages brief, respectful and truthful.