

# **In Your Own Backyard**

*A Step-By-Step Manual*

**“Organizing Campus and District Office  
Visits With Legislators”**

**“The Do’s and Don’ts of Lobbying”**

**“Organizing Letter Writing  
and Phone Campaigns”**

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# Introduction

“Our future — as a free society and as Community Colleges — is in peril and in doubt. It is also in our hands. We need people of the college community to activate themselves to become political, and to exert and involve themselves . . . to see to it that what they want comes to be. That’s what we humans have the capacity, the right, and the responsibility to be all about — right now!”

*The Honorable John Vasconcellos  
Member, California State Assembly*

Your help is needed to increase the political strength of community colleges throughout California. The FACCC legislative program is designed to fully utilize the network already operative on the campuses through our association, and to provide the information needed to transform our constituency into a viable, influential, and respected political force.

Studying this organizing manual will increase your knowledge of the legislative process, and will maximize your ability to communicate with — and influence — your local legislator.

If you have any questions about FACCC’s legislative program or any of the material included in this manual, contact the FACCC office at (916) 447-8555.

The status of tomorrow’s community colleges depends upon each of us taking a more active role in government to determine the outcome of decisions made by policymakers. We look forward to working with you in this critical effort.

For our students. For our colleges. And for our future.

# Organizing Campus and District Office Visits

## Grassroots Advocacy: Lobbying on the Local Level

Effective grassroots lobbying can take place literally in your own backyard. In fact, lobbying is essential to affect statewide decisions made at the Capitol.

It is important to note that while votes on critical pieces of legislation and state budget issues are taking place in Sacramento, legislators have in mind their local constituents — including you and your colleagues — when casting their votes. Every legislator understands that maintaining support from the public is a top priority, otherwise he or she may not return for another term in office.

The effectiveness and influence of FACCC and other advocacy organizations depend directly upon the personal and political relationships of individuals and groups in a legislator's district. Community College faculty are viewed by many legislators as especially important because they are "opinion leaders" in the community. Maximize your message by demonstrating that what you think represents a consensus on campus — and in the district. Such influence can be developed through persistence, creativity, and interaction between community colleges and members of the state Legislature. If this interaction does not occur, then there is no significant pressure for legislators to address the real needs of Community College students, faculty, and staff. Policymakers are then left to come to their own conclusions. These may include misperceptions and simplistic solutions that eventually will devastate the Community College system, and ultimately, the state and its economic future.

For effective grassroots advocacy, concerned individuals must be consistent and persistent in applying the simple — yet powerful — principles of political influence summarized in the following pages. Committed involvement, expressed through campus visits, district office meetings, and visits to the state Capitol, does make a difference. The key is developing informal, reliable relationships — in your own backyard — before a major political conflict or crisis occurs. Once an atmosphere of trust has been established, your legislator will welcome your opinions and suggestions — anytime.

## Advocacy Starts at Home: Campus Visits

Unfortunately, many members of the state Legislature are influenced by false information and political misperceptions about Community Colleges, and especially our students. In the halls of the Capitol, some still view community college students as teenagers supported by their parents. Some also believe that community college students are somehow "less smart" than

students attending four-year universities, and that the quality of education is lower.

In order to combat these and other falsehoods, it is essential that Community College faculty host campus visits to familiarize legislators with the realities of our system. These visits increase the importance of community colleges by making the campus an integral part of a legislator's concerns. Whether taking legislators on a campus tour, or inviting them to be guest lecturers, you are "lobbying" on behalf of all community colleges. This kind of advocacy will make a difference in a member's votes as we face the critical struggles before us in the state budget and on important legislative bills.

There are many ways to involve legislators with local community colleges. However you choose to introduce legislative leaders to your campus, keep in mind that the primary purpose of campus visits is to establish an informal working relationship, so that later — when a "crisis" occurs — legislators will be more receptive to your concerns and proposed solutions.

### ***Identify Your Local Legislators***

Don't be embarrassed if you don't know your local Assembly and Senate members. With redistricting and the imposition of term limits in recent years, the faces and names have changed dramatically.

Even with all the changes that have taken place, identifying your local legislators is as easy as opening up a telephone book. (Remember that larger or more populous community college districts are often represented by several different legislative members, so don't limit yourself to lobbying just one or two individuals.) Look in the State Government Offices section of the "Government" listings under the white pages of a local (or out-of-area) telephone book. Find the listing for "Assembly" or "Senate," then the phone number(s) for the "District Offices," and tell the staff person who answers your call that you are phoning to find out who your (and your campus's) Assembly and Senate representatives are. (To assist you, he/she will ask for zip codes and/or local addresses.) Once you've identified your local legislators, request their current Capitol and District Office phone numbers and addresses, since listings in the telephone white pages may not be accurate.

### ***Other Important Contacts***

A legislator's District Office and Capitol staff can be very helpful — or, if approached incorrectly, very harmful. Legislators depend almost entirely on their staffs for briefings on constituent and district concerns, as well as for in-depth analyses on major issues. Legislators invariably consult with trusted staff members before taking a position or casting a vote on a particular bill or budget item.

Get to know your legislator's District Office staff — on a first name basis, if possible. Offer

your assistance, perhaps in gathering information about the local campus. Invite the District Office staff for legislative campus visits, and be sure to notify the District Office of upcoming special events.

Always remember: the people staffing legislative offices are as important to your effectiveness as an advocate as legislators themselves. Support staff can often assist you in avoiding bureaucratic barriers, or provide you with information that otherwise may not be easily accessible. Support staff — once a strong, trusting relationship is established — will also provide you with special access to legislative leaders and key staff.

## Setting Up A Campus Visit

Setting up a visit is a simple task. What is important, however, is remembering that a legislator's impressions will be long-lasting. It is imperative that his or her perceptions accurately reflect the realities — and uniqueness — of your campus. Remember that the focus of these visits is to educate a legislative member about Community Colleges to establish a positive long-term relationship. Requesting a specific legislative action or other assistance should wait until a later date — after an initial campus visit has taken place.

**Timing Is Important** — The timing of campus visits is extremely important. Ideally, these visits should be planned for the beginning of the school year, during the fall legislative recess. Otherwise, visits can be effective at the beginning of the legislative session, during the months of January and February — allowing sufficient time before the chaos of the legislative session begins, and before specific concerns and issues emerge that you will want to address with your legislator.

**Be In Control** — Decide what times and days of the week will provide the most effective overview for legislative members (a Friday afternoon, for example, is not a good time). Don't allow the legislator to dictate your agenda or the purpose of the visit. Determine a minimum of three alternative dates/times for a legislative visit, and then phone the District Office of your Senator and/or Assemblymember to arrange a visit. To give yourself enough time for planning and preparation, allow at least two weeks between issuing the invitation and the legislator's arrival.

**Plan Your Agenda** — Careful planning is the key to hosting a campus visit that is successful — developing a good working relationship with a legislative member — and avoiding one that is dull or ineffective (subsequently doing more harm than good). These important components should be considered when planning to host a legislative visit:

**Diversity** — Make certain that the legislator experiences the diversity of your campus, including student ethnicity and age, as well as unique curriculum. Have the member meet with a variety of representatives on your campus such as students, faculty, classified staff, administrators, and student support services personnel such as financial aid advisors, counselors, and librarians.

**Dramatize the Impact of Legislative Decisions** — Stress the impact that recent Community College budget cuts have had on the availability of classes, and student support services and programs such as financial aid, counseling, library books and classroom materials. Invite the legislator to sit-in on a basic skills or ESL class, a student club meeting, or theater and arts classes. Connect legislative decisions to the reality of what has happened to your campus.

**Encourage Dialogue** — Allow time for the legislator to interact with different campus representatives and encourage question and answer sessions. Also plan for an opportunity for the legislator to address the student body or an Academic Senate meeting.

**Follow-Up and De-Brief** — If the legislator had questions that you were unable to answer, be certain to follow-up with necessary information. At a minimum, send a letter following the visit, thanking them for their time and interest.

# District Office Visits

## *Research the Background of Your Legislators*

Researching the background of the legislator you are trying to influence is a crucial step for grassroots lobbying. Additionally, understanding their personality as well as past positions on legislative and budget issues will assist you in effectively delivering your message and requesting a legislator's assistance. The more you know about your representative's background, the more effective your interactions will be, and it will be easier to develop a strong working relationship. There are a number of ways to educate yourself about a Senator or Assemblymember:

**News Articles** — Check with your campus or community library for newspaper and/or magazine articles about a legislator's background and political positions. Most of this information can be found in articles that are written during election campaigns. You can also conduct research through the "archives" of campus and community newspapers. Many times such archives are organized by subject (i.e., by the name of the Senator or Assemblymember).

**Local Organizations** — Phone local area organizations — from the Chamber of Commerce and National Organization for Women (NOW) to local educational, environmental, and human rights organizations — and ask for information about a legislator. If possible, speak with a staff member who has had interactions with the legislator's office and staff.

**District Offices** — Each District and Capitol office can provide you with a biography of the legislator you wish to influence. Although these biographies are intended for public relations purposes, they can still provide a framework for other investigative work.

**FACCC** — The FACCC office can provide you with information about a legislator's personal tendencies and voting patterns, as well as his or her committee assignments in the Legislature.

## Scheduling Your First District Office Visit

In order to initiate and maintain a strong working relationship with your local legislators, it is important that at least some meetings be scheduled at the local District Office. Not only are legislators more accessible, this also allows for meetings that are removed from the chaos of the Capitol (and therefore likely to be more personal and productive).

As important as it is to schedule these visits for the purpose of influencing statewide issues, your relationship with a legislator can also assist you in resolving campus issues, or in avoiding bureaucratic hurdles. After you have completed your background preparation, use the following guidelines to prepare for effective District Office meetings:

**Establish A Goal Or Purpose** — It is important to focus on a specific purpose for your visit before showing up on a legislator's doorstep. Once a clear goal has been established, then the steps needed to accomplish the goal can be planned.

**Understand the Member's Realm of Influence** — Be certain you clearly understand the role your local legislator can play in supporting the progress of your issue. Is he or she a member of an appropriate policy or fiscal committee and/or subcommittee in the Legislature? Is your visit immediately preceding a relevant floor vote in the Assembly or Senate? Is your legislator part of the established legislative leadership? Clearly identify how a legislator's influence will help you on a particular issue, and be realistic about the extent of their influence both in the state and on your campus.

**Identify Who Will Be Attending From Your Campus** — It is important to limit the number of people meeting with your legislator. Select a maximum of three to five individuals. Without a strict limit on the group size, your legislative representative will likely give a speech to your group instead of participating in give-and-take discussion. And in order for you to be able to share information and insights, a discussion is what you are after. Prior to your meeting, decide who are the most appropriate people from your campus for the topic you will be discussing. In most cases, student and faculty representatives should be included; on many issues, you may also want to include administrative or classified staff.

**Scheduling** — When the Legislature is in session, the legislative schedule generally permits legislators to be in their districts each Friday and during holidays. Call the district office at least a week in advance to make an appointment with your legislator. Effective meetings may be as long as an entire lunch or as brief as 15 minutes, depending upon your agenda — or the legislator's — and pressing time limitations.

When you call to schedule your visit, you normally will be asked (1) the topic of your meeting and (2) the number of people attending. Ideally, meet directly with the legislator. However, this may not be feasible. In such cases, identify the staff member who is most appropriate for your visit (you don't want to meet with an intern who will have little background in, or influence with, the issues you will be discussing). Generally speaking, if your legislator is not available, request a visit with either (1) the Chief of Staff or (2) the staff member who works on higher education issues.

**Pre-Brief the Member** — If possible, provide legislators with materials for their review well in advance of the meeting. This not only assists a legislator in preparations for the meeting but also demonstrates that you are informed and organized — and a reliable future resource for information.

## Prior to Your Meeting

For guidance in preparing for your meeting, refer to the Do's and Don'ts of Lobbying included at the end of this document. Additionally, be sure to:

**Know Your Issue** — If you intend to discuss specific legislation or budget issues, be sure you possess the most up-to-date information available, including bill numbers, their current legislative status, copies of the amended version(s), any committee analyses, and vote counts in committee and/or on the floor. For specific budget issues, have the budget item number available. For other issues of importance — such as those specific to your campus or district — be certain to bring pertinent information to the meeting with you.

No matter what the issue is, be certain to provide a one to two-page synopsis so the legislator and/or staff member can easily assimilate your information. Don't be concerned if during the meeting questions arise that you are unable to answer. Simply state that you don't have a response at the moment, but you will provide the requested information in a follow-up letter.

**Identify Assignments for Attendees** — Break down your issue into sub-issues, and assign each sub-topic to specific individuals representing your campus. This will help in delegating any research that may be needed, and will also prevent one person from dominating discussions. Your lobbying group should meet at least once, several days prior to the scheduled meeting, to review roles and to determine if additional information is necessary.

**Role Play** — Prior to your scheduled meeting, it's helpful to “role play” your visit. Identify someone to be the legislator and/or staff member and conduct a “mock” meeting. This will help you to “trouble shoot” problems before they occur, as well as to prepare for any unanticipated questions or arguments that may arise. Conduct your role playing based on the background research you've done on the legislator, regarding both their voting record and personality. (And if it goes badly at first — remember, this is just a trial run. Try again.)

**Contact the Media** — Schedule an appointment with campus and community newspapers as well as radio and TV stations, to provide some form of public follow-up to your meeting. Whatever the outcome of your discussions — unless discussions are continuing — it is imperative that the public be informed of a legislator's position(s).

## The Day of the Meeting

Again, refer to the Do's and Don'ts of Lobbying attachment to prepare for your meeting. Pay particular attention to the following points:

**Be Specific and Get a Commitment** — When lobbying on a particular issue, be certain that your presentation is specific (1) when explaining the issue, and (2) in requesting assistance from the legislator. If you want your legislator to take a position on a budget item or a bill, then seek a commitment from them before you leave. If any other formal action is needed, then find out if your representative is willing to assist you.

Obviously, when a meeting is organized simply to develop a long-term working relationship then a specific commitment is not needed. In fact, as mentioned previously, such interactions are essential in establishing a framework for future requests. Legislators are always being asked to do something on behalf of constituents or special interest groups, and often are appreciative when the focus is on establishing a dialogue and reliable working relationship.

**Ask How You Might Help Your Legislator** — There may be times when your legislator needs your assistance. Learn what the legislator's priorities are, and determine if you or your campus can help.

**Become a Resource** — Ask if there is any information you can provide to either assist your legislator in achieving his or her goals, or to gain their support on the issue you're lobbying for. Whatever information is requested, be certain to follow-up on time and accurately. Also, use your representative as a resource; ask for suggestions on how to achieve your goals.

**Leave Something Tangible and Debrief** — Leave something to remind a legislator or staff member of your visit (i.e., a copy of the bill or a position paper), in addition to business cards and a current phone number and mailing address. After your meeting, sit down with the members of your group and review (1) how the meeting went, (2) what things you would do differently, (3) what commitments were made by the member, and (4) what follow-up is needed by the group (at a minimum, follow-up should include a thank you letter). After the debriefing, either meet with local media to discuss the meeting's outcome or write a letter to the editor outlining the meeting's results. Also follow through by contacting FACCC with any insights.

## Other Important Points to Remember

- Keep in touch with local legislators throughout the year. In addition to making at least one campus visit and two or three District Office visits, assure legislative representatives that you are always available as an information source — and are keeping abreast of the activities and issues before the Legislature — by providing monthly contact through letters, newsletters, or bulletins.
- Letters are an especially important source of information for legislators (contact FACCC to receive an Organizing Letter and Phone Campaigns packet). Each legislator “counts” mail on issues they are considering, and will many times “vote with the district” as that position is articulated in letters received. Legislators also pull quotes from constituent letters when preparing to speak on a legislative issue.
- Mailgrams and Telegrams — available at Western Union offices — are convenient lobbying tools (the cost is billed to your phone number), and have the extra advantage of standing out among other constituent mail. These are especially helpful for last-minute efforts to influence a legislator’s vote.
- Telephone contacts should be limited to emergency situations when there is no other means of contacting a legislator in time to influence his or her decision.

## A Final Note

It’s true that legislators and their staffs have access to a great deal of information, but don’t forget that you do also. Most often, legislative material speaks to the general impact of various issues and concerns. You, however, have access to information specific to the needs of your legislator’s Community College district — i.e. the number of faculty laid-off due to funding reductions; class size; the physical condition of classroom equipment; the importance of various courses to special student populations; and the lack of essential classes, library books, and support services.

When you share with local legislators specific information relative to the Community College district (and your campus), you also increase your credibility and usefulness. The more concrete the information you provide, the greater your access and influence will be.

# The Do's and Don'ts of Lobbying

## The Basics:

**Be Prepared** — Do your homework. Legislators have relatively small staffs, and they depend upon lobbyists and constituents for much of their information. Providing legislators with organized, useful, clear and concise information will assist them in making informed decisions.

**Be Honest** — Your word and credibility are your bond, and your integrity will be judged by your honesty. There are two key rules to remember:

- ◆ Do not hesitate to say: “I don’t know, but I can get that information for you.”
- ◆ Do not guess or make up an answer.

**Be Brief** — State your views concisely and clearly.

- ◆ Do not waste the most valuable commodity a legislator (or anybody else) has — time. Be sensitive to time constraints; some legislators may have only a few minutes to meet with you, so be prepared and be succinct.
- ◆ Know the basics, but don’t worry that you’re not an expert (you’re not expected to be). Present your points from the perspective of your campus and its needs.
- ◆ Give anecdotes and specific examples pertinent to your campus regarding the effects of budget cuts and/or legislation on students and faculty.
- ◆ Anticipate tough questions, such as “If we don’t cut schools, where do you think we should cut?” Often stating a simple “I don’t know” followed by an alternative solution (such as raising revenues) will prevent embarrassing political situations.
- ◆ Do not overkill. Recognize when you’ve gotten what you came for, or as much as you’ll get. A legislator will avoid you in the future if you ramble, or otherwise waste his/her time. And be an active listener; be sensitive when a legislator wants to talk.

**Be Respectful and Polite** — Always address legislators properly (Assemblyman/woman or Senator). During discussions, if you disagree, say so in a straightforward way. But keep the argument separate from the arguee. Focus your arguments on facts and reasons behind disagreements — not personalities. If a legislator currently does not support you on an issue, accept that fact, yet continue lobbying through district visits and letters. Always remember that the same legislator could be your ally next time.

## More Tips:

**Breathe** — Just take a few deep breaths before meetings and during stressful situations. It will help you to relax and collect your thoughts.

**Be Reliable** — When you make an appointment with a legislator, keep it. Be punctual. If you need to cancel an appointment, call the legislator's office as soon as you know. When you tell a member you will send information, do so promptly.

**Select a Spokesperson and Assign Roles** — Appoint a member of your group to introduce everyone, and begin the conversation. Plan what each member of the group will discuss, and role-play your parts prior to each meeting. Give everyone in the group an opportunity to speak. It's also important for each person in your group to take notes for later debriefing.

**Don't Be Timid or Awestruck** — These are your elected representatives, who also happen to be human. As a constituent, you shouldn't allow a legislator to dominate the conversation, or give speeches. Courteously, but forcefully, make your points and ask your questions. Try to get the member "back on point."

**End Your Visit With a Question** — Ask how they'll vote on an issue (something many constituents forget to do) or ask if you can send additional information. If the member hasn't taken a position on your issue yet, offer to respond to any concerns he/she may have with follow-up information.

**Leave Something Tangible With Your Legislator** — A fact sheet or a copy of a bill (if applicable) — anything that visually will remind your legislator of your visit and your position on an issue.

**Debrief and Follow-Up** — Immediately following the meeting, members of your group should review their notes to be certain everyone knows (1) what was said; (2) what was promised by all parties; and (3) what next steps are needed to gain (or maintain) the member's support. Additionally, honestly evaluate the group's performance before your next meeting, to identify your collective strengths and weaknesses. Your efforts should then be coordinated so that any promises made (ie. sending more information, attending a district office meeting, etc.) are fulfilled in a timely manner. Also, be certain to provide an assessment of your meetings to FACCC and/or another organization you're lobbying for.

**Thank You Letter** — Be sure to send a letter of thanks that (1) expresses your appreciation for the visit; (2) summarizes the purpose of the visit; and (3) reiterates the action you want taken by the legislator. The letter should be handwritten or typed (no photocopied form letters!), and mailed within a few days of the meeting.

# Organizing Letter-Writing and Phone Campaigns

## Introduction

In an average two-year session, more than 6000 bills are introduced in the state Legislature — each having a particular significance to its respective authors and supporters. Contrary to popular opinion, legislators are not familiar with every bill making its way through the legislative process. Therefore, it is imperative that you alert your legislators to bills that impact Community Colleges. Conducting organized letter writing and phone campaigns is an effective way to make community college issues a priority for legislative representatives.

The following are some basic tips on how to organize letter/phone campaigns on your campus and in your community. Always remember that legislators can't act on something they don't know about. As a community college faculty, student, or staff member, it's your job to alert them to the importance of policy and state budget issues. Remember, too, that creativity is the key to initiating an effective campaign, so do whatever it takes to involve faculty, students, administrators, and classified staff in saving community colleges.

If you have any questions or need special assistance, contact a  
FACCC Legislative Advocate at (916) 447-8555.

## School's Out? No Problem

Many ideas for organizing letter and phone campaigns can be carried out even during quarter, semester, or summer breaks. In fact, it's imperative that these types of campaigns continue through the summer, given the lengthy deliberations and postponements that typically occur before a final state budget or other important legislation is actually signed.

## A Personal Note

Try not to be discouraged or become overwhelmed by the challenge of initiating a letter or phone campaign. You don't need to — and shouldn't — do this alone. Form a core group (between three and seven people) that can share responsibilities, as well as the frustration and stress that may occur. Once the campaign begins, and people get excited about an issue, the volunteers will follow. Just be certain to take care of yourself and your personal needs in the process.

## **The Pen is Mightier Than the Sword: Initiating Letter Writing Campaigns**

Personal letters sent to legislative members of the state Assembly and Senate are the most effective and influential way to express your views on important legislation and/or budget issues affecting community colleges. To a legislator, one letter can represent the views of hundreds of constituents. Organizing a letter writing campaign on your campus and in your community is also an excellent way to inform other about the importance of various issues, and to encourage individuals to take direct action to influence the outcome.

To get lists of legislators' names and addresses, contact the administration office, employee unions, student government, or the local academic senate. To distribute information, create a central drop-off where people can receive updates about what steps need to be taken. You can also start a campus or community "chain" letter directing campus members to write letters or make phone calls. Start out by mailing 10-20 sample letters, and ask chain letter recipients to mail 10-20 copies after they write/type the information and mail their own letters (or make their phone calls).

## **The Nuts and Bolts of Letter Writing Campaigns**

- ☞ **Contact your campus and local newspapers**, either through (1) press releases or (2) letters to the editor — often the most read section of a newspaper — to inform the campus and surrounding community about the issues being addressed.
  
- ☞ **Contact staff and faculty organizations (i.e. the academic senate, unions), the district board of trustees, administrators, student groups, and community organizations/businesses.** The number and diversity of people participating are the most important elements to a successful letter writing campaign. Specific organizations and clubs most likely will have a direct interest in the legislation you are advocating for (or against). Some groups may have special influence with specific legislators or the governor's office. By making a concerted effort to personally contact people on campus who belong to such groups, you will increase the likelihood of success while building a strong coalition for future advocacy efforts.

Even local businesses (or city and county officials, chamber of commerce representatives, and the membership of the local Rotary Club and other service organizations) can be encouraged to be involved — especially if budget cuts and increases in student fees are being proposed. The local impact can be easily illustrated: class cuts and higher fees mean fewer students and faculty, less disposable income, and therefore less business. You can also make "I Support Community Colleges" signs, and give them to local businesses in return for a letter to a local legislator (preferably on the business letterhead).

- 📁 **Set up letter writing tables on campus.** Tables should be set up at busy “campus traffic” intersections. If enough information is provided at the tables, then minimal staffing will be required. Make the following items available:
  - ① a sample letter
  - ① a breakdown/fact sheet of the issue(s)
  - ① mailing address(es)
  - ① stamps (if possible)
  
- 📁 **Take a few minutes at various organizational meetings to encourage people to write letters.** When you attend the membership or board meetings of campus or community organizations, provide a sample letter (or brief arguments) and give five minutes to allow everyone to write their letters.

## Writing A Letter — Some Useful Guidelines

- 📁 **Letters should be handwritten or typed, with the name and address of the author (letter writer) clearly legible, along with his/her “title,” if any.** The name, address, and title of the legislator should also be legible. “Form letters,” even with individual signatures, are strongly discouraged, since they are much less effective in influencing a legislator’s position.
  
- 📁 **The first paragraph of the letter should identify (1) that you are a constituent; (2) who you represent; and (3) the issue that you’re writing about.** The paragraphs that follow should include the reason(s) for your position on an issue. Be brief in your arguments — limiting your letter to one page — but speak in your own “voice.” Use anecdotes whenever possible. Legislators and their staff like to hear about their constituents’ personal experiences when considering an issue.
  
- 📁 **The closing paragraph should reiterate what you want from your legislator(s), and thank them for their time and consideration.**
  
- 📁 **Be sure to (1) sign your letter, and (2) include your full name and address.** Also add your official title or position, if applicable and appropriate. (Do not use business or organizational letterhead unless you have been authorized to represent that business or organization on the matter at hand.)
  
- 📁 **Fax it if you can’t mail it.** If time constraints demand an immediate response on legislative issues and there isn’t time to mail a letter, fax it instead. Phone your local legislator’s district office to request their fax number. However, in many instances this number will not be released to the general public, so plan your campaign accordingly.

## ***Example Letter and Mailing Address***

Assemblymember (or Senator) \_\_\_\_\_  
State Capitol  
10th & L Streets  
Sacramento, CA 94248-0001

Dear (Assemblymember or Senator) \_\_\_\_\_:

My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am a (faculty/student/staff) member at (campus), and am writing to ask you to (support/oppose) (legislative bill/state budget issue).

Along with many (students/faculty/staff) at (campus), I (believe/am concerned about \_\_\_\_\_ issue.) (State your reasons for supporting or opposing the issue, giving a personal account of how this issue will affect you and your campus).

(Reiterate what you want from the legislator regarding their support or opposition. Do not threaten a legislative member, but simply state what you expect them to do.)

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Your Signature and Title (if any)

Full Name and Address (Be certain to write legibly, since the legislator may wish to respond.)

# Speaking With One Clear Voice: Telephone Calling Campaigns

Although telephone calls don't affect a legislator's decisions to the same degree as letters, they are important in last-minute efforts to express your opinion. When time constraints eliminate letter writing as an option, phone calls are the quickest and simplest way to register your position on a bill or state budget issue — especially when frequent and on-going calls are received by a member's office.

## Organizing A Telephone Calling Campaign


**Telephone campaigns have the greatest impact when many people are making the calls.** Therefore, it's important to encourage broad participation on, and around, your campus. To generate interest in your issue and encourage involvement in your phone campaign, contact campus and community groups, local media, and other organizations (i.e., local businesses, the chamber of commerce, elected city and county officials, members of local service clubs, etc.). Develop arguments on the issue that are "organization-specific" (i.e., the cost or equity of a proposal).




Other creative organizing techniques are also available. For example, distributing flyers describing the issue — including a legislator's phone number — is extremely effective in lobbying an issue, as well as in organizing and educating the campus community. You can also borrow (or rent) a portable cellular phone (check with the CEO office first) and set up a "phone your legislator" table.

You can easily initiate a campus-based phone tree that can be used throughout the year. Begin with a small group of people (five to ten) who are responsible for calling a smaller number of people (three to five). These few people are responsible for calling another three to five people. And on and on. With this "pyramid" approach, the handful of phone calls made at the top of the pyramid can result in hundreds of phone calls.

**Don't hesitate to be creative.** Try whatever method(s) you think will encourage people on campus, and in the community, to make phone calls. The most important element is just that: getting large numbers of people to participate.

## Making Phone Calls — Some Useful Guidelines

 **Participants should contact their legislative members at their Capitol offices.** Check the white pages of your local phone book to find these numbers, or call a local organization that has them available.

-  **When making phone calls** (1) give your full name; (2) your campus; (3) the group/ organization you're affiliated with (if applicable); and finally, (4) state that you're calling to register your position on a bill or state budget issue.
-  It seldom happens, but **sometimes the staff person taking your call will ask for specific reasons why you hold a certain position.** It is important to keep your response limited to one or two sentences. Try to include an argument that discusses (1) the cost of a program; (2) its policy effects; or (3) the repercussions for you and/or the campus.
-  In organizing your campaign and your campaign materials, it's helpful to **develop a quick reference card detailing (1) what should be said; (2) how it should be said; and (3) a brief description of why this particular issue is important.** For photocopying, these "how-to" reference cards can easily fit 4 to 6 per page by typing the information on standard letter-size paper. You can also copy the information individually on 3 x 5 cards.






### Phone Call Example

Hello, my name is (first, last name), and I'm a (faculty/student/staff) member at (campus). I'm calling to register my (support/opposition) for (legislative bill/state budget issue).

A brief one or two sentence argument supporting your position, if needed.

## Setting Up Phone Banks

Establishing a phone bank is another way to generate a large number of telephone calls with only a small number of people. Successfully setting up and utilizing phone banks can be an empowering experience for people, and also helps develop camaraderie on your campus. A team of five to ten people, systematically calling others and asking them to call their legislators, can generate between 100 to 200 lobbying phone calls. Additionally, if each person called is asked to phone one or two other people, then the numbers increase to 200 to 600 phone calls. Acquire lists of names from academic senates, faculty departments, the admissions and administrative offices, or the student government. You will need:

-  access to phones and phone lines
-  lists of phone numbers
-  tally sheets
-  a script
-  refreshments

Many offices on campus are accessible for evening phoning — even when the campus is shut

down during breaks or for the summer months. For individuals who are unable to make it to campus, ask them to do some phoning at home. Provide tally sheets so that phoners (1) keep track of the phone numbers being called, to prevent duplication; (2) record the total number of calls made; and (3) record any responses or comments received.

If you're coordinating a phone bank, arrive at least 30 minutes before your callers. Have everything set up before people arrive. It's also important to provide some sort of refreshments. Be certain to take a 15-minute break after every 60 to 90 minutes of phoning. Having the group set goals for the evening (i.e., number of calls made), and reviewing the previous night's totals, will provide incentive for your volunteers. It's also important to do some practice role-playing prior to making calls, to help volunteers become more comfortable on the phones.

A phone script will help people to keep their talk focused and short:

### A Sample Script

Hi, this is \_\_\_\_\_. I'm a (faculty/student/staff) member at (campus). We need you to phone (Assemblymember/Senator) and ask him/her to (support/oppose) the (legislative bill/state budget issue). We need your help if we're going to be successful on this issue. Do you have a moment?

All you need to do is take a minute and phone your legislator, and leave a brief message about (give bill number or budget issue; oppose or support position; one or two sentence argument).

The phone number for (Assemblymember/Senator) is (Capitol office number).

We'd also like you to phone at least two other people (if the person seems willing, have him/her call three to five other people and ask them to call, too).

Thanks for your time. If you need any other information, or would like to volunteer, you can call (contact person and phone number).

## *Special Thanks:*

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