

Tips for Communicating with Elected Officials

Elected officials at all levels of government want to hear from their constituents. When it comes time to vote on legislation, elected officials look to their constituents to get a sense of what the voters would like them to do.

Technology has increased our access to elected officials and, consequently, the volume of constituent communication received by our representatives at the state and federal level. Due to the increased amount of contact, legislators depend on their staff to help sort through and organize incoming constituent concerns. Whether you choose to write a letter, make a phone call or schedule an in-person visit, the guidelines listed below will make your communication more effective.

For more information on regional transit and to look up your Kansas elected officials' contact information, visit www.kctransit.org and click on *Take Action*. For more information on the legislative process in Kansas, visit www.kslegislature.org.

Writing Elected Officials – Letters & Email

- **BE BRIEF:** Keep your message brief. State upfront why you are writing. Focus on one central issue and indicate what action you would like him or her to take.
For example: *"I am writing to ask you to support regional transit in Kansas City by voting yes on SB825."*
- **PERSONALIZE YOUR MESSAGE:** Provide one or two reasons why you are making your request. If appropriate, include personal information about why this issue matters to you.
- **Close by restating your request,** and indicating that you look forward to receiving a response from the elected official.
- **Include your full name and address** so you are easily identified as a constituent. Elected officials are most concerned with the views of *their* voters.
- **A note about e-mail:** In our technology-driven society, e-mail has become a popular, cost-effective and quick way to share personal views with elected officials. Because of these benefits, legislators receive a high volume of electronic communication. When sending an e-mail, be sure to include the bill number in the subject line. This will help ensure your message receives proper consideration.

Making a Phone Call

- Know what you want to say before you call.
- Your call will most likely be answered by a staff person, and it is important to be prepared to leave a specific message.
- Identify yourself as a constituent.
- Let the person know which issue you are calling about. If necessary, he or she will direct you to a staff person that handles that issue.

- Tell the staff person you would like to leave a message for your elected official to support/oppose a specific piece of legislation using the bill number.
For example: *"Please tell Senator Brown I support SB 825."*
- Thank the staff person for his or her time.

Scheduling a Visit

- Make an appointment by calling the elected official's office and requesting to speak to the scheduler. Elected officials maintain busy calendars, and making an appointment is the only way to ensure you will have the opportunity to speak to someone.
- Let the scheduler know that you are a member of the elected official's district and what issue or specific legislation you wish to speak about.
- Depending on the legislator's availability, you may meet with a staff member instead of the elected official. The elected official's staff is trained to hear constituent concerns and will relay those to your elected official.
- Your meeting will be brief. Make sure you "make the ask." Be prepared to ask the staffer or elected official to support a specific issue or piece of legislation.
- Thank them for their time. If you meet with a staff person, indicate you will look forward to a response from the elected official.