



MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

Citizens' Guide for Communicating with Elected Officials

Getting Your Point Across is as Easy as 1, 2, 3

THREE TYPES OF MESSAGES

- 1. Face-to-face meetings** are the most compelling way to make your point. Personal conversations leave a lasting impression and are surprisingly easy to schedule. Call your elected official's office for an appointment.
- 2. A phone call** is nearly as effective and often more convenient than a face-to-face meeting. Ask to speak to elected officials directly. If they are not in, state why you have called and request a call back. You will get a call.
- 3. Letters or e-mails** can also be effective. Correspondence from constituents gets attention and is a top priority in elected officials' offices. When writing, always include a return address, even if you are sending an e-mail. The address is crucial because elected officials want to know if the writer is a constituent. When writing a letter, include your phone number and ask for a response. Then, watch your mail. The most effective way to reach federal legislators is email or fax, mail is discouraged.

MICHIGAN ELECTED OFFICIAL REFERENCE GUIDE

Governor Jennifer Granholm

PO Box 30013
Lansing, MI 48909
Phone: (517) 373-3400

www.michigan.gov/gov

Your State Representative:

Honorable _____
House of Representatives
PO Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909
Phone: _____

Your Senator:

Honorable _____
Michigan State Senate
PO Box 30036
Lansing, MI 48909
Phone: _____

Visit the Michigan Legislature online to identify your representative:

<http://www.michiganlegislature.org/>

FEDERAL ELECTED OFFICIAL REFERENCE GUIDE

To contact your U.S. Congressional Representative: www.house.gov

To contact your U.S. Senator, go to www.senate.gov

Contact your county MSU Extension office for a list of county commissioners.

THREE TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING

- 1. Get to the Point** — the quicker, the better. A brief statement works better than a speech, stacks of materials or lots of data. Also, a handwritten note works better than a lengthy letter. Use this format:
 - Say who you are and indicate where you are from.
 - State your support for the organization and ask for a response.
 - For extra impact, tell how you benefit or are personally affected.
- 2. If Questioned, Don't Panic** — You do not have to know everything about MSU to be effective. But be sure to listen and refer questions you can't answer. If an elected official disagrees with you, don't argue. Be prepared, however, to politely restate your position.
- 3. Remember to Say "Thank You"** — Elected officials are people, too. Nothing is more gratifying than a "thank you" or "well done." Elected officials rarely get congratulations; so let them know when they've done a good job (even if it's just for listening to your concerns). A "thank you" is a powerful way to earn your elected official's attention.

CONTACT CHECKLIST

- ✓ Choose the method (a visit, phone call, letter or e-mail).
- ✓ Schedule and plan ahead to get an appointment and consider the content of your message.
- ✓ Make the contact.
- ✓ Stay brief and to the point.
- ✓ Don't panic if asked a question or if the elected official disagrees with you. Listen and be courteous.
- ✓ ALWAYS thank your elected officials for their time and attention. Follow-up with a note of appreciation.