



EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF NH

Making contact: Telephone calls to Legislators

Often when an issue being considered by legislators needs immediate response, a phone call is the best option. By calling your legislators, you are not imposing on them but are helping them to know more about questions that they face every day. Your message should be brief and to the point, and focused on one issue. If you feel more comfortable, write it out before you call.

- **Timing is important.** When a legislative committee is scheduled to take up a bill, or it is scheduled for a floor vote, you should try to contact legislators two to five days ahead of time.
- **Your phone message should be brief and to the point.** Write it out before you call if that will help. Get it down to a very brief explanation.

When you make your call:

- Be prepared for voice mail. Slowly, leave your name and contact number. In one brief sentence, describe what action you want your legislator to take and ask to be called back at his or her convenience.
- Identify yourself as a constituent (the name of your town will do).
- Identify the piece of legislation you are asking them to support or oppose by number and general title. Talk only about *one piece of legislation* per communication. Example: "I am calling to ask you to support House Bill (abbreviated to "HB") 123, regarding... The Judiciary Committee will hear testimony on this bill." State your position by talking about how the legislation would impact you, your ministry or have impact on the state's budget.
- Explain the bill status: "HB 123 was heard by the House Health, Human Services and Elderly Affairs Committee on February 12, which will now make a recommendation to the full House. The full House will hear the bill on March 10."
- If you sent a letter or email to the legislator already, you might say: "I recently wrote you a letter asking you to support HB123. I was calling to see if you have any questions about the importance of supporting this issue." You might also ask, "Have you decided if you are going to support HB123 yet?"
- Know your legislator's position on the issue. If you don't know, ask how he or she intends to vote.
- Remember, if you are asked a question that you do not have the answer to, simply say: "I don't know the answer to that, but I would be happy to find out for you."
- Be prepared for skepticism. Press on with your messaging, acknowledging that the state may have fiscal issues, but people's needs are still there.
- End your conversation with:
 - "Can I count on your vote on HB123?"
 - "Is there more information that I could provide for you? "
 - Be polite and thank the legislator for his/her time

After the vote, follow-up with a note of thanks or disappointment—being respectful in all cases. If you haven't already done so, let Episcopal Church of NH know about the conversation and the response you received.