



Advocacy Education Series: Emailing Your Legislators

Emailing your elected officials is an efficient way to communicate your priorities and make your voice heard in the legislative process. Follow the tips below to ensure your message is as effective as possible.

Put your name and address at the top of the message to make it clear that you live in your legislator's district. Legislators don't have any obligation and little time to read messages from people who are not constituents.

Humanize your message. Many people are uncomfortable sharing their personal experiences or believe that such information is inappropriate in the legislative process. But personal stories separate your message from standardized messages. These messages are more likely to be read rather than simply tallied.

Be brief and make your ask clear. Include only what legislators and their staff need to know and don't feel the need to make every single argument that relates to the issue. State your request as a concrete, actionable item.

Send your message when the legislation is being considered. Your message is useless if it arrives after a critical vote.

Don't send abusive or rude letters. You are allowed to disagree with your legislator, but you will not be effective if you abuse or threaten them.

Avoid attachments. Legislative offices rarely print or read attachments to e-mails. You can offer to provide supporting documents on request instead of attaching them.

Do not spam your legislators by sending a message every single day about every issue on which you develop an opinion. An office that receives too many messages from a single person quickly loses sight of the urgency or expertise that the constituent can bring to a specific issue.

Establish your credibility by letting your legislator know of any have relevant expertise or professional credentials that you have.

Don't lie. Any story that sounds too perfect or any statistic that is not substantiated will not bolster your position. Make sure any statistics you provide are backed up with primary sources readily available.

Make sure to proofread. Even if a staffer is able to determine your meaning, grammatical and spelling errors reflect poorly on your overall argument.

Don't CC Everybody. Resist the urge to send a copy of your message to every legislator. A legislative office wants to know that you appealed to them for specific action, not just sent them a copy of a memo distributed to all.

For additional guidance or questions, please contact Monica L. Reid, Senior Director of Advocacy, at mreid@nacdl.org.