



## TIPS FOR MAKING YOUR LEGISLATIVE CONTACT COUNT

### **Just Do It! The most important tool for effective advocacy is to *Just Do It!***

Being present and raising your voice is powerful. Legislators hear from very few constituents on most issues. They are interested to know what the people who elect them care about. You do not need to be an expert on the legislative process or even on the underlying issue in order to be effective. By speaking up, you are making a difference!

### **Express your passion. Let them know why you care about this issue.**

Personalize this. Make sure the legislator understands the problem you are seeking to address and why you care about it.

### **Prepare a brief message and a few points that support your position.**

Think about the issues you want to raise and why. Assemble a few facts to support your position. Address how this affects you, your family, your community and the State of Georgia.

### **Walk a mile in the legislator's shoes. Know something about your audience.**

Learn about your legislator. Do you have a personal contact? What part of the state does s/he represent? If s/he represents you, be sure to say so! This will build up their interest level very fast. What is their profession or business? Do they belong to a committee that would be addressing one of your issues of concern? How will your issue affect them in the next election? Are many of the people he or she represents affected by this issue? All of these factors affect how they may react to your request and what might motivate them to support you.

### **A little paper can help make a lasting impression.**

Provide the legislator with some brief written material on the issue. Give them your business card or contact information to reinforce who you are and how they can reach you later on.

### **Follow the Golden Rule. Courtesy, kindness and a sense of humor go a long way.**

Never burn bridges. There is always another issue and another day tomorrow and these folks have a long memory. **Think of this as the beginning of a beautiful friendship.**

### **Follow up and don't give up.**

After your contact, follow up with a note or e-mail thanking the legislator for taking the time to speak with you about your priority issues and urge them to contact you if you can be a resource to them on this issue in the future.

### **Build a year round relationship with your elected policy makers.**

Helping with your legislators' elections this year and meeting with your legislators back in the district when the General Assembly is not in session will build a strong relationship that will serve you well when the legislature convenes in January!

# **Finding the Facts and Making the Case on-Line**

*or*

## ***How to be an effective advocate without leaving home!***

### **Who represents me?**

Go to the Open States website ([www.openstates.org](http://www.openstates.org)) and enter your address to identify your State Senator and Representative and how to contact them. You will also find information about their votes on key issues, and other useful facts. You can use this site to follow legislation throughout the session.

You can also learn more about legislators, key Bills and other analysis from the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* website Legislative Navigator: <http://legislativenavigator.myajc.com/#members>

- A photo of the legislator and contact information.
- Information about the district including population, median income, median age, education, racial composition, etc.
- The legislator's "batting average" – a ratio of bills passed to bills introduced in the past session.
- Top contributors, business type and amount of contributions.
- Bills sponsored.
- Recent votes.
- Committees and leadership roles.

### **What is happening at the Georgia General Assembly?**

The Georgia General Assembly website ([www.legis.ga.gov](http://www.legis.ga.gov)) is a great source:

- Information about your legislator.
  - A photograph
  - Their personal, professional and legislative background
  - Information about their district
  - Committees they serve on
  - How to reach them (office, phone, fax and email)
- House and Senate Committee members and what Bills they are hearing.
- Get a copy of a Bill (searching either by Bill number, key word or subject matter) and update the status of the legislation, current versions and amendments, and what votes have been taken.
- Find out how your legislator is voting on the issues.
- Watch live House and Senate floor debates and key House Committee meetings (as well as accessing archived videos).

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