

Communicating with Your Legislators: A Handy Primer *

Writing Your Legislator



1. Write **your own** senator or delegate.
2. Write when it is practical.
3. Be courteous and identify yourself as registered dietitian, a dietetic intern, a VDA member, and as a constituent. Give your full address.
4. Whenever possible, identify bills by number. Otherwise, clearly describe the measure.
5. Be informed about the issue and then write your own views/opinions from personal knowledge or experience. Form letters do not get the attention of the legislator.
6. Focus on one issue. Be brief, but write enough to be clear. Give reasons for your position. Avoid professional jargon.
7. Ask questions that require a response.
8. Check spelling and grammar! Don't send a letter with typos, spelling errors and bad grammar.
9. Write legislators when they do something you approve of, even if just a simple thank-you.
10. Do not threaten legislators or pretend to wield vast political influence. Do not try to instruct your legislator on every issue that comes up.

Model Address

The Honorable _____ (use full name)
General Assembly Building
Richmond, VA 23219
Dear Senator/Delegate Smith:

Visiting Your Legislator



1. Be respectful and kind to the secretary and the aide.
2. Make an appointment. (It is equally important to visit legislators when they are at home as it is when they are in the General Assembly session.)
3. Be prepared to talk on one or two issues.
4. Be on time.
5. Identify yourself as a registered dietitian or dietetic intern, a VDA member and a constituent.
6. Briefly and concisely share your experiences and first-hand knowledge of education issues.
7. Leave written materials.
8. Offer to get more information, if needed.
9. Be willing to meet with the legislative aide if the legislator is unavailable.
10. Send a follow-up thank you note

Telephoning Your Legislator



1. Give your name and full address.
2. Identify yourself and your organizational affiliation.
3. Speak directly to the senator or delegate, if possible.
4. Be brief and concise. Focus on one issue.
6. Indicate your position.
7. State what bill or budget amendment you are calling about.

Before the General Assembly Session

1. Access the General Assembly website to identify your legislators:
<http://conview.state.va.us/whosmy.nsf/main?openform>
2. Visit your senator and delegate at their home office.
3. Share any fact sheets that VDA is promoting.
5. Motivate your friends and family to make contact with their senator or delegate.

During the General Assembly Session

1. Identify legislation in which you are interested.
2. Follow the legislation through action of subcommittee and committee.
3. Find out your legislators' committee and subcommittee assignments. The budget legislation will go through the appropriations or finance committees.
4. Contact your legislator when legislation reaches their subcommittee, committee, or the floor. The General Assembly Constituent Viewpoint Hotline: 1-800-889-0229, in Richmond: 648-1990 (8:30a.m. – 5:00 p.m. during the session).

Email delegates:

Del+ delegate's first initial+ last name@house.state.va.us
Example: DelRBrink@house.state.va.us

Email senators:

district#@sov.state.va.us
Example: district28@sov.state.va.us

After the General Assembly Session

Write letters of appreciation to those who were helpful.
*Thanks to the Virginia Education Association for this primer.

