



Effective Education

Supporting Your Belief in Iowa State University Extension and Outreach

Educating others about issues of importance is easier than you think. The first step is to have a willingness to speak out and the belief that you will be heard.

Elected officials are people just like you and your family, your neighbors, and your friends. Don't let nerves deter you from your mission. Our democracy centers on citizen involvement. Elected officials need and want input from their constituents. It is your right — and responsibility — as a citizen to share your opinions with your elected officials. Visiting the Iowa Statehouse is one step to helping legislators understand issues of importance to you.

Use these common-sense guidelines to make your conversations with your legislators time well spent.

- **Identify yourself as a constituent.**
Don't assume your legislator knows who you are.
- **Know your legislator's name and use his/her correct title.**
Don't call your legislator by his/her first name unless you are already on a first-name basis.
- **Deliver a simple, concise message focused on impact.**
Don't overwhelm your legislator with too many details.
- **Support your opinions with accurate, reliable facts.**
Don't use generalities. Don't guess or make assumptions about an issue.
- **Tell how an issue affects you or someone you know.**
Don't criticize, be negative, or make issues partisan.
- **Listen to what is said, and then ask follow-up questions.**
Don't ignore or show disrespect of differing points of view.
- **State what action you want them to take.**
Don't expect what is financially or politically unrealistic.
- **Maintain optimism and be positive.**
Don't be cynical, adversarial, or defensive.
- **Express your appreciation for his/her time and attention.**
Don't take your legislator for granted.
- **Follow-up your contact with a letter, phone call or e-mail.**
Don't make promises you can't or won't keep.
- **Do sustain your efforts throughout the year.**
Don't wait to communicate until you need something.
- **Ask other local supporters to communicate your message.**
Don't assume others are speaking out about an issue.

Continue your efforts once you return home by attending community coffees or by contacting your elected officials via letter, phone, or e-mail. Remember, if you support what you believe in, you may convince others to support it, too.