Communicating & Connecting with Legislators

Briefing for Legislator Visits
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WNA Nurses Day at the Capitol
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Influencing Decision Making on Proposed Legislation

• Influence begins with Effective Communication to your Legislator
  • State Legislature – Assembly & Senator
  • Federal Legislature – Congress & Senator

• Communication Methods
  • Email
  • Letter writing
  • Phone calls
  • Testimony
  • Meetings (at home or office in Madison)
  • Fund Raisers
Guidelines for Legislator Communication

- Introduce yourself
- You are his/her constituent
- Describe your nursing background
- Purpose of communication – be very clear
- Provide rationale for your position
- Describe how it impacts your patients, community or population – provide a personal story if you can
Guidelines for Legislator Communication

• Specifically ask if he/she will support your position
• Let the legislator know that you are available for any further questions or any questions on health care related legislation.
• Thank him/her for their time and consideration of your request
• Provide contact information
Email - Guidelines

- **Use** personal email – not employer
- **Subject Line**: List Legislative Bill Number and Title
- **Salutation** – Dear Representative/Senator
- **Message**
  - Refer to previous guidelines
  - Offer to be available for questions
  - Ask for response “*I look forward to hearing from you*”
- **Closing**: Provide Contact Information
- Provide your name and nursing credentials
Letter Writing - Guidelines

• **Include** Date & Your Return Address
• **Use** Elected Official’s Office Address
• **Correct Salutation** – Dear Representative or Senator
• **Refer** to previous guidelines only reduce to writing and be specific
• **Ask** for a response, “I look forward to hearing from you”
• **Provide** your signature, credentials and contact Information
Phone Calls

- Generally used for a time when an action is pending and more influence is needed.
- Ask to speak directly to your legislator
- State your name, that you are a RN and that you are requesting Support/Opposition to bill number
- Succinctly describe the importance of the legislation and what it means to you.
- Request support of your position
- Ask for a response.
- “Thank you for your time.”
Meeting with Elected Official

Making the most of the time that you have
Meeting Preparation

- Schedule appointment
- Conduct research on your legislator
  - Career and personal background
  - Involvement in health care legislation
  - Identify legislative committee assignments
- Bring Fact Sheets to leave behind
- Bring business card or contact info
- Know where office is located
- Arrive early (10 minutes)
Meeting with the Legislator or Legislative Staffer

- Be Professional, Friendly, Courteous *(You may only have 15 minutes to meet)*
- Describe purpose of meeting
- Provide Fact Sheet
- Be concise – identify the 3 most important points
- Avoid nursing *jargon* – think of this as a “*patient education*” scenario
- Answer questions
- Summarize
- Ask about how he/she will vote
- Volunteer to be available for this or other health care related issues
- Thank him/her
After the Meeting

• Send a Thank-you, *emphasize the ask*
• Follow-up if you have not heard about how he or she will vote
• Remind that you are available for questions
“I think one’s feelings waste themselves in words; they ought all to be distilled into actions which bring results.”

Florence Nightingale