

STRATEGY FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

There are certain protocols to remember when communicating with the legislators by phone, email, letter or in person. Here are a few communication tips:

Personal visits - When you visit your legislator:

- **Be on Time** - Make certain you reach your appointment on time, or a few minutes early.
- **Keep Group Small** - Limit your group to 3 to 5 people. Agree in advance who will be the spokesperson (if applicable) to introduce the group and explain the purpose of the visit.
- **Be Prepared** - Be informed about your issue; know the bill number and author's name. Know what you want to say. Emphasize how the issue affects you, your local and your community.
- **Focus on Issue** - Present your views politely, but persuasively. Use relevant facts. Bring an expert on the subject to support your views, if possible.
- **Be Brief** - Since legislators have extremely busy schedules, plan on getting your message across in 5 to 10 minutes at the very most. Don't get sidetracked into small talk -- make your time really count -- "visit" only after you have gotten your point across.
- **Be Firm** - Find out exactly where your legislator stands on the issue. Ask what action he or she intends to take. Don't be afraid to press for specifics.
- **Listen Carefully** - Be ready to answer questions clearly. If you don't know the answer to a question admit it -- tell the legislator you will provide the answer later. Listen carefully to your legislator's viewpoint -- even if you disagree.
- **Report Back** - Results of your visit are very important to your lobbyists in Sacramento. Appoint a lead person who will report back to the lobbyists.
- **Follow-up** - Send a thank you note/letter to your legislator. Also include a summary of your position plus any other new information that supports your views.

–CFT Legislative Staff
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