



LOUISIANA RETIRED  
TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

# Becoming a Virtual Activist: Reaching Out to Your Legislators

Presented by: Clyde Hamner  
LRTA State Legislative Chair

# Today's Topics

- Writing Letters and Emails
- Making Phone Calls



# Tips for Writing Letters and Emails

You should always include the W's in your letter: **who, what, when, where and why**. They should understand who you are and where you from. This information helps them make a personal connection to you.

But, they also want to get down to business: what are you contacting them about and why? You should be clear about the bill you are contacting them about and what action you want them to take. Then, explain why you want to them to take that specific action.



# Steps for Writing Letters or Emails

1. Address
2. Introduce yourself
3. Specifically ask them to take action
4. Explain why you want them to take this action
5. Thank them for their time and consideration of the matter.



# Address

Properly and respectfully address the legislator.

For example: “Dear Representative Smith,” or  
“Greetings Senator Doe.”



# Introduce Yourself

Include a little information about yourself to make a personal connection with the legislator.

For example: “I taught in ABC Parish for 32 years,” or “I live in XYZ Parish, where I taught for 35 years.”



# Ask Them to Take Action

This should be a direct, brief statement.

For example: “I am writing to ask you to oppose HB 000 by Rep. John Doe.” or “I asking you to support HR 111, a resolution by Rep. Jane Smith.”



# Explain Why

Use research to back up your argument. You can find the latest research and articles at [lrta.net/articles](http://lrta.net/articles).

For example: “A recent study shows why this would be beneficial.” or “Research shows making the changes proposed in the bill could be costly.”





# Thank Them For Their Time

Before you end your letter, make sure to reiterate what action you would like for them to take and thank them for their time and consideration of the matter.

For example: “I hope you will consider supporting this resolution, as it will help many people. Thank you for your time.”



# Tips for Making Phone Calls

Phone calls are another effective mode of communication. To avoid confusion, try to address only one bill or issue in the phone call.

Remain calm and polite on the phone. You may be firm when discussing the bill or issue, but do not become confrontational.

If the legislator or staff member asks a question that you do not know the answer to, it is ok to say “I’m not entirely sure, but I will find out more information and get back to you.”



# Steps for Making Phone Calls

1. Introduce yourself and ask to speak to a legislator or staff
2. Ask them to take action
3. Explain why you want them to take this action
4. Thank them for their time and consideration of the matter.



# Call and Introduce Yourself

When the staffer picks up the phone, introduce yourself as a constituent. Briefly explain that you are calling about a specific issue or bill and ask if you can speak to someone regarding the issue.

If you are redirected to speak to the staff member or legislator, reintroduce yourself and state the issue or bill you are calling them about. Clearly state the position you would like for them and provide background information as to why.



# Ask Them to Take Action

Clearly state the position you would like for them and provide background information as to why.

Be prepared with articles and research if you need to rebut their argument or back up your position. Offer to send them the research you are citing.



# Thank Them For Their Time

As the conversation closes, thank the legislator or staff member for their time.

Send a follow-up email or letter to thank the legislator for speaking with you and reiterate the position you hope they will take on the bill or issue you spoke with them about.



# What If You Have to Leave a Message?

If the staff member or legislator is unavailable, ask to leave them a message. In the message, reintroduce yourself as constituent, state the issue or bill you want to discuss, ask them to support or oppose the bill, and leave a call-back number.



# Sample Message Script

Hi, Senator Smith. My name is Jane Doe. I am a retired teacher and one of your constituents. I am calling you in regard to SB 000 and asking that you oppose this bill. SB 000 would be harmful to retired teachers and the state. Other states that have done what this bill proposes saw increased costs. Please oppose this bill when it goes before the committee tomorrow. If you have time to discuss this, I'd appreciate a call back. My number is 000-000-0000. Thank you.





# Food For Thought...

Not every interaction with a legislator will feel or be successful. Don't be discouraged if you cannot personally speak with a legislator or if a legislator seems uninterested. **Your efforts are noticed.** Taking the steps to interact with your legislators will still make a large impact and show there is power in our numbers!

Also, effective communication is a two-way street. When we want legislators to take action, we need to let them know. When they take the desired action, make sure to take some time to thank them (via email, letter, phone, etc.)!



# A Few Reminders

- Retirement legislation must be pre-filed at least 60 days prior to the start of session to be introduced on the first day. This is a good indicator of potential calls to action.
- Regular Session begins April 12, 2021.
- Stay updated with LRTA! Make sure to like us on Facebook and join the Email Club for timely updates.



# Additional Resources

How to Write Letters: <http://bit.ly/HowToLetters>

How to Write Emails: <http://bit.ly/HowToEmails>

Reaching Out to Your Legislators: <http://bit.ly/ReachOutHowTo>

LRTA Email Club: <https://bit.ly/LRTAEmailClub>





LOUISIANA RETIRED  
TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

**Questions? Contact us at  
[info@lrta.net](mailto:info@lrta.net).**

**Thank You**

**This presentation was prepared February 2, 2021.**