

DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE MESSAGES

It can be daunting to contact your legislators. If you can come up with brief answers to these five questions, you are well on your way to coming up with a message that is succinct, clear, and compelling. Try it out!

1. WHO ARE YOU?
 - What is your name? Other relevant personal information?
 - Do you live in the legislator's district? Are you a constituent?
 - Are you affiliated with an organization? How many members? Is it Statewide? Regional?

2. WHAT IS YOUR ISSUE?
 - Describe your issue as if your legislator is unfamiliar with it – legislators have their policy plates full of everything from salmon to roads to child care to prisons. They are likely not an expert on every topic. Don't assume they know it all.
 - Share about your issue briefly and plainly in no more than a few sentences. Don't bombard them with too many details. You can leave behind detailed materials in a meeting or send more detailed materials over email later on if need be.

3. WHY DO **YOU** CARE?
 - Explain why this issue is important to you and other people in your district or state. Speak from personal experience!
 - If you don't have personal experience with the topic, speak from your core values. Why is this issue important?
 - How does it affect your life? The lives of people you know? Use real people and examples if possible.
 - Tell a personal story from the heart – you can use facts, numbers, and graphs as well, but the story is what will make your message stand out and moving.

4. WHY SHOULD **I** CARE?
 - Why should your legislator care?
 - What's happening in their district, their community?

5. WHAT DO YOU SPECIFICALLY WANT ME TO **DO** ABOUT IT?
 - Have a clear call to action – a "to-do" or "ask".
 - Be specific in your request – don't ask for "support," that is too vague. Ask for a "yes" or a "no" vote. Ask that they sponsor a bill or bring one up for a vote, etc.
 - Keep the dialogue open – ask if they would be willing to read some supporting materials that you could send or get a follow-up phone call from you to discuss the topic.
 - Thank them, and don't forget to follow-up with them!

Now it's your turn to try!

1. WHO ARE YOU?

(Assume, for the purposes of this exercise, that you are speaking to your own legislators)

2. WHAT IS YOUR ISSUE?

3. WHY DO **YOU** CARE?

4. WHY SHOULD **I** CARE?

5. WHAT DO YOU SPECIFICALLY WANT ME TO **DO** ABOUT IT?

6. THANK THEM & FOLLOW UP

FAITH ACTION NETWORK

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