

In person script

Source: https://www.ast.org/legislation/documents/FL_PDF_Feb_2013_Call_to_Action.pdf

Follow this basic script:

- My name is (state your name)
- I live in (state your city) which is in your district and I am a constituent of (state your legislator's name).
- I am a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority in city (can share the name of your chapter if you like)
- I would like to express my support/opposition for Senate Bill ??? by ??? (write out 3 concise bullet points supporting your position)
- This legislation promotes _____ (use information provided in the Rationale Section of the Legislative Advocacy document).
- Personalize the impact of the legislation to your community.
- My email address or phone number is _____ (so they can get back to you about when the legislation is being scheduled for a vote.)
- Ask them to get back to you to let you know when it will be scheduled for a vote.
- Ask them what support you may offer for bills they are advancing throughout the legislative process.
- Thank them for their time.
- Follow up and say thank you
 - Be sure to send a thank you note promptly after your meeting. This offers another opportunity to restate your views, send any additional information or request action on the issue. If you met with a staff aide, be sure to send a separate letter or email to your legislator.

Follow Up Letter template

Date

The Honorable [Name of Legislator]
The Florida [Senate] or [House of Representatives]
Mailing Address
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1100

Dear [Senator] or [Representative]:

(Thank them for their time, reference when the meeting/visit was, and the reason for the meeting or visit)

Example Paragraph 1:

I would like to express my appreciation for the opportunity to meet with you on (Date of Meeting). I know you are very busy, and I am grateful that you made time to talk with me about the issue of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Gap Funding (LFIR #1376 by Senator Bracy).

Example Paragraph 2:

(List the key points that were discussed, provide any follow-up information if it was requested, and offer your services for follow-up information should they need it). The funds will contribute to the successful retention and graduation of undergraduate students who have been disadvantaged by virtue of economic or educational circumstances; Increase in student enrollment; decrease in student default rates; reduction in student debt and improve graduation rates.

Example Paragraph:

As you may recall, we discussed how increasing HBCU funding would benefit the community and state of Florida as a whole. Use an example of what was discussed. Should you require any further information or insight on this topic, feel free to contact me.

(Close with a final thank you)

Example Paragraph:

Again, I thank you for taking the time to meet with me. I hope that you found this discussion beneficial when addressing this issue in the legislature.

Sincerely,

[Your Signature]

Your Name (Typed or Printed)

Your Address

[Your phone number and email if you offered for them to contact you]

Handout: 10 Tips for Communicating Effectively with Legislators

1. *Know how to reach them.* Be sure to get your legislators' telephone and fax numbers, address and email address. Even if you have this information, it wouldn't hurt to double-check in early January since legislators are sometimes assigned new offices after the election.
2. *Find out the best time to reach them.* Ask them when they're most likely to be in their office. It will, of course, depend upon their committee assignments. As a rule, early morning and late afternoons are the best times to catch a legislator in his or her office. But also keep in mind that their schedules are less predictable in the final weeks of the session.
3. *Remember calls or faxes are better than letters.* The legislative process is very fast paced. Legislation can be introduced and voted on in committee within 24 hours. If you want your legislators to know how you feel about a bill, don't assume you have time to write a letter. Call or send an fax/*email* immediately.
4. *Be specific.* Always provide the bill number, author of the bill and a brief summary of what the bill's about when you contact them. In addition, to the extent possible, let them know how the legislation will impact your city.
5. *Be concise.* Remember, legislators are inundated with letters, faxes and phone calls from lobbyists and constituents. Your message, whether it's communicated orally or in writing, should be brief and to the point. Try to keep anything you write to no more than one page.
6. *Know their chief of staff and/key legislative staff.* Maintaining contact with the key staff persons of the legislator that you are trying to influence can be very helpful in scheduling appointment and knowing what the 'hot points' are with respect to legislation that is sponsored by or being voted on by the legislator.
7. *Don't expect them to be an expert on every bill.* It's impossible. Each session, more than 1,000 bills and resolutions are introduced. If your legislator's not familiar with the bill you're talking about, don't be surprised or offended. It may be the first time they've heard about it.
8. *Don't burn your bridges.* It's natural to be disappointed if your legislator doesn't vote the way you ask him or her to. But don't let one vote destroy your relationship. Remember, you're going to need their support on many other issues.
9. *Avoid personal attacks in the newspaper.* Calling a legislator's character into question serves no purpose, other than to create controversy and sell newspapers. If you feel it's necessary to air your grievances publicly, stick to the issues. You'll accomplish more in the long run.
10. *Don't forget to say "thank you."* Legislators, like mayors and council members, appreciate positive feedback, so look for opportunities to give them a pat on the back, especially publicly.

As found the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Incorporated Connections Resource Guide

Preparing for the Meeting

Participants must be familiar with the official's position and record on the issues of concern. Many elected officials have web sites containing useful information: voting record on bills, copies of the bills, biographies and committees served. Use the Library of Congress' *loc.gov*, your state's web site or your country's most appropriate site to search for the summary and status of bills.

The following is a list of items to keep in mind when preparing for a meeting:

- Agree on the goal before the meeting.
- Select the most effective spokesperson as the principal speaker and prepare to make a united presentation. Never disagree in front of the person with whom you are meeting.
- Plan and deliver a highly focused message.
- Prepare your request for action in advance.
- The spokesperson can call on others to add information, as necessary.
- **Never debate** the issue with the official.
- Show understanding, courtesy and respect, even when you consistently disagree with the public official.
- Do not overwhelm with facts and figures.
- Be prepared to answer questions and to respond to counter-positions.
- Bring a summary sheet on the sorority's position on the issue if appropriate.
- If the meeting involves a group or collaboration of organizations, choose the most effective and knowledgeable spokespersons. Agree on the goal or objective of the meeting and on the group's position on the issue beforehand.
- Do not be disappointed if the Legislative Assistant or another senior staff member conducts the meeting. Senior staff members have a great deal of influence with the official; therefore, it is very important that they understand the issues.
- You may request a group photo while in the office.

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