

Get in the game! FAQs

Q: My senator or representative hears from many different constituents. Can one person's opinion make a difference?

A: Every voice matters. Many legislators say they only have to hear from four or five constituents about an issue before they realize it's important in their district.

Q: What's the best way to contact a legislator?

A: A face-to-face meeting generally is the most effective means of communicating with legislators, followed by a live phone call. A personal letter—mailed, e-mailed, or faxed—comes next, while a voice mail message is close behind. Form letters are the least preferable. Every legislator, however, is different. If you don't know a particular legislator's preference, mix it up. Use different forms of communication. If you are going to use a form letter, customize it as much as possible so that it appears to be different from the others the legislator is likely to receive: Add information about your company's circumstances, how many employees work for you, the towns your employees come from, and so forth.

Q: How do I find out who my legislator is? What if I didn't vote for him or her?

A: Use the "find your legislator" tool at www.cbiam.com/gov. You can search by town or ZIP code. Your elected officials don't know whether you voted for them and are unlikely to ask. The fact is, once elected, they represent you and all other citizens in their districts.

Q: What if my legislator asks me a question I can't answer?

A: Don't be afraid to say "I don't know. Can I get back to you with that answer?" Legislators in Connecticut are part-time lawmakers who have different backgrounds and careers. They might be just as anxious about you asking them a question they can't answer! They will appreciate an honest "I don't know" rather than a bad guess.

Q: What should my message include?

A: Keep your message brief, but reference the proposed legislation you're concerned about and how it will affect your company and employees. Also include your name and your home or work address. If you are contacting a legislator who represents your business address, be sure to include either the number of employees who work for your company or, if possible, the number who live in that district. Many legislators

will not respond to communications from outside their district. If you would like a response, add your phone number and e-mail address.

Q: What if I get a voice mail box?

A: It's OK if you don't speak with your legislator directly. Leave a succinct message stating your concern, your town, and a call-back number. If you don't get a prompt response, don't be discouraged. Toward the end of the General Assembly session, for example, legislators work very long hours and are often in the House or Senate chamber, where they are unable to take phone calls. Their aides will get messages to them, so it's important that you leave a message.

Q: What if I call my legislator and I get someone else's voice mail?

A: Every legislator has an aide who often fields his or her calls, and aides are dependable about relaying voice mail messages.

Important resources

- CBIA's Government Issues & Politics site www.cbiam.com/gov
- Connecticut General Assembly www.cga.ct.gov
- Connecticut House Democrats www.housedems.ct.gov
- Connecticut House Republicans www.housegop.state.ct.us
- Connecticut Senate Democrats www.senatedems.state.ct.us
- Connecticut Senate Republicans www.senatorepublicans.ct.gov
- House Democrats 1-800-842-8267
- House Republicans 1-800-842-1423
- Senate Democrats 1-800-842-1420
- Senate Republicans 1-800-842-1421