



## Advocacy – What you can do

1. **Write to Your Legislators:** Handwritten, mailed (or faxed) letters are still an effective way to communicate with your legislators.

### Letter-Writing Tips

- Include your postal address, especially on e-mails. Otherwise the office has no way of knowing that you are a constituent.
- Personalize your message. The most direct value comes from a single thoughtful letter generated by a constituent. A short story about your personal experience makes your letter more powerful.
- Request specific action. LOCS can provide you with our current message to the legislature. When possible, give the names of pending legislation or specific bill numbers.
- Be concise. Keep your letter short and to the point. One-page letters are ideal. Say what you need to say, but be as brief as possible.
- Be informative. Tell your legislator why this issue is important. Provide some brief information (reference to a case, a few statistics, etc.) to make the issue concrete and very real for your legislator.
- Follow up. Call your legislator's office and ask to speak to the aide in charge of ..... Mention your letter and repeat your request. Get a definite answer to your request (a yes or no) or make plans to get a definite answer soon (calling back on a certain day, for example).

2. **Visit Your Legislators:** A face-to-face visit with an elected official, or his/her staff, is the most influential form of advocacy. This direct lobbying can be time-consuming, but it can also be fun, interesting and rewarding. Elected officials have very demanding schedules. Don't be disappointed if you have to meet with a staff person—chances are good that they know more about the issue than the member anyway! Group visits are particularly effective and increase your chances of getting an appointment.

### Legislative Visit Tips

- Do your homework. Plan to discuss only one or two issues. Assume that you will have about 15 minutes. Find out how, or if, your legislator has voted on the issue(s) in the past.
- Gather facts about the issue(s). LOCS can provide you with information on the bill(s), background information and talking points.
- Follow these guidelines during the visit.
  - Since you will have limited time to speak with your legislator, know what issues you want to address and stick to them.
  - Be brief. State your position as succinctly and simply as you can. If the legislator has questions, you can expand on your remarks.
  - Be prepared for questions and the give-and-take of the visit. If the member asks you for information that you do not have, say that you do not have it but will get it to them. Then follow through.
  - Target your message. Your goal is to make your legislator see how supporting your position serves his/her interest and philosophy. Your legislator may disagree strongly with your assumptions and with the goals you advocate. That's OK. Respectfully note that you hope that (s)he'll change his/her mind.
  - Follow up. Write a note to the legislator or staff person thanking them for their time and attention they gave you during the visit. If you need to provide additional information, it may be included in this letter or given by phone or e-mail.



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3. **When is the Best Time?** Any time is a good time to communicate with your legislator.

### Specific Opportunities.

- To urge legislators to introduce and cosponsor bills. This is particularly effective early in the legislative session, when members and staff are researching and developing policy positions.
- To thank them for their support once they sign on to a bill.
- To ask for a committee hearing.
- To recommend improvements or changes in a bill's provisions as it is considered at the subcommittee or committee levels.
- To urge a bill's passage (or defeat) when votes occur on the House and Senate floors.

**Check the Lake Orion Community Schools Website for new information, legislative updates and resources.**

[www.lakeorion.k12.mi.us](http://www.lakeorion.k12.mi.us)

**Legislative Information**

<http://www.lakeorion.k12.mi.us/Content2/1112>

### Who represents me?

- **State Senator:** <http://www.senate.mi.gov/>
- **State Representative:** <http://house.michigan.gov/>

### Michigan Legislature

[http://www.legislature.mi.gov/\(S\(fgguycanpvu5a4ypb3kq4vui\)\)/mileg.aspx?page=Home](http://www.legislature.mi.gov/(S(fgguycanpvu5a4ypb3kq4vui))/mileg.aspx?page=Home)

Reference: <http://tcadp.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/Legislative-Advocacy-101.pdf>