

Suggestions for Contacting your Legislators

- Call them at their home during hours you would not mind receiving such a call (unless they hold a position at their place of employment or conduct a business at which they can be reasonably expected to take calls - - - especially those related to their duties as a state legislator) in which case you could call them at their work place)
- When calling a legislator you do not know personally; who does not necessarily know you or could be expected to know of you; be sure to respectfully ask to speak to “Representative” _____ (last name) or “Senator” _____ (last name).
- Pronounce the legislator’s name correctly. Ask reliable local sources for the proper phonetic pronunciation if the name is unfamiliar to you; practice it before you use the name if you must to insure accuracy; and if it still might be causing you some difficulty simply refer to the state lawmaker as “Representative” (if he or she really is one) or as “Senator” if the person really is one.
- Legislators are proud of their respective legislative chamber. When constituents confuse members of the House of Representatives (70 folks serving two-year terms of office) with members of the Senate (42 people serving terms of four years) legislators tend to dismiss or discount those people because they presume them to be uninformed and uninvolved politically - - - therefore not someone to whom they need to pay particularly close attention.
- Never refer to a “legislator” as a “legislature” as that mistake screams “amateur” as loudly as any verbal gaffe you can make
- Similarly, don’t expect to always be referred to as “Doctor” by a legislator. Many will incorrectly refer to you as Mister or Miss/Ms. Nonetheless; correctly address a lawmaker as either Representative _____ (last name) or Senator _____ (last name.)
- Be brief but get your few points across, notably that:
- (1) You are a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine who (resides) and/or (practices) in the legislator’s district (this information can be made available to you or you can access this information on the Internet from the state legislature’s Website <http://www.legis.state.nm.us>)
- (2) You would appreciate an opportunity to meet with him/her and discuss some important issues of concern to you and your profession. Ask when and where he/she might be able to meet with you. (Don’t be too pushy. Legislators are busy people, but take some initiative in suggesting a time and place). Then limit your request for time to something in the 15-minute range unless it includes a hosted meal. Conclude your meeting by offering your volunteer services to review, analyze and comment on any legislation that might be introduced that affects veterinary medicine and request that the legislator apprise you of any such legislation. Leave your contact information including office location and mailing address, telephone and fax numbers, and E-mail address.
- (3) Subsequent to # 2 above, if you are contacting a legislator with whom you have established a constituent relationship whether by telephone or in person, get right to the point. Tell the legislator you are calling about House Bill _____

(number) or (Senate Bill ____ (number) followed by the title of the bill [for example, House Bill 311 – Animal Shelter Facilities] which you Support or Oppose and ask him to vote likewise.

- (4) Present a quick summary of why a bill would be good or bad and offer to provide additional information if desired by the lawmaker. (Notify the Association office of special requests for information).
- Be mindful of the time and do not impose too heavily on a legislator.
- Meeting in person rather than simply talking on the telephone enables you to observe body language combined with speech that could reveal a legislator's inclination to either support or oppose your request.
- Pay the bill for any food or beverage charges coincident with any meeting you might have with a legislator whether or not you are discussing legislation, proposed or pending.
- Start now to initiate or improve a professional relationship with your local state Representative and your local state Senator.
- The closer we get to the third Tuesday of every January when our state legislature convenes for 30-days (even-numbered years) or 60-days (odd-numbered years) the busier your local legislators become.
- Your legislators will soon be beset with requests from many lobbyists from within and outside your legislative district, all competing for some face-time to discuss their pet projects and client's desires.
- Engage your legislators now to avoid standing in line to see your legislators, both of whom will wonder why you waited until their busiest time of the year to meet with them - - - and might even ask you what took you so long.
- **Inform the Association if you are close friends and/or socialize with any legislators, regardless of whether or not they live in your district.**
- **Don't limit your efforts to simply your local state senator and state representative. If you know legislators from other parts of the state or happen to have occasional or coincidental contact with legislators, introduce yourself as the healthcare provider you are, "the other family doctor," and tell them you and your professional association are politically-involved and pay close attention to the legislative process. Let them know you might call them on a legislative issue if it is important to you or the state (and something will almost certainly be every year going forward) and take notice of their reaction. You might ask who their "other family doctor (DVM)" is in their home community. Then apprise Tamara in the Association office of your contact so she can make and maintain a contact list and inform your lobbyist of the potential of a new resource.**