

FINDING YOUR PUBLIC OFFICIALS

U.S. Senate

You can find your U.S. Senators by visiting <http://senate.gov/> and selecting your state from the drop down box in the right hand corner.

U.S. House of Representatives

You can find your Representative by visiting <http://www.house.gov/> and entering your zip code in the upper left hand corner.

State Legislators

You can find your state senator and representatives by visiting <http://leg.wa.gov>. Click on "Find Your Legislator" on the left hand side of the screen and enter in your address.

VISITING A PUBLIC OFFICIAL

Person to person visits are the most effective way of letting a public official know about you, your issues, and the Association. The Chapter hosts an annual lobby day in Olympia to provide advocates with an opportunity to educate their legislators about the issues important to the Alzheimer's community. For more information contact Margaux Gillespie at margaux.gillespie@alz.org or 206.363.5500.

TIPS

- Do your homework on the issues, and if possible, on the person with whom you will meet (such as the person's committee assignments and interest in your issues). Know ahead of time what you want to say and stick to the point.
- Lead with your own story. Let the official know what Alzheimer's means to you, your family and your community.
- Go with a group, with a plan for a spokesperson and an order of speaking. Practice through a role play first
- If you meet with an aide and not a legislator, don't panic. Legislative aides are the eyes and ears of their bosses. They will communicate your message.
- Visit state and federal legislators in their district, when possible. They are often more relaxed and receptive when they are away from the capitol.
- Avoid jargon and insider acronyms.
- Keep it simple, direct, upbeat, and brief!
- Have a condensed version of our key points (2 minutes) ready for a wrap-up in or in case your meeting time gets cut short.
- Policy makers expect to be asked for assistance. Make a specific request for support.
- Bring a fact sheet (to leave behind) outlining your basic message, with details on how to reach you. Include information about your Chapter and its services.

- Write a thank you note, send requested information, or otherwise follow up on any interest or commitments expressed by the official in your meeting.

WRITING TO A PUBLIC OFFICIAL

State and federal legislators pay close attention to their mail. Letters are one important way for them to know whether an issue matters to the people they represent. The volume of letters a public official receives on an issue can affect the way he/she votes. One letter can make the difference! The Chapter sends out action alerts when we need advocates to write letters to their legislators in support of certain legislation. To sign up for these alerts contact Margaux Gillespie at margaux.gillespie@alz.org or 206.363.5500.

TIPS

- Write a personal letter. It is much more effective than a form letter. Tell your own story about how the issue affects you, your family or your community.
- Identify yourself as a constituent and/or a member of the Alzheimer's Association.
- Identify the bill number or issue on which you want action in the first paragraph of your letter, and state what action you want.
- Try to say it in one page (two pages at most) and be sure your return address is legible.
- Ask a question in your letter. By doing so, you show that you expect to continue the dialogue with the elected official.
- Be polite and persuasive (No name calling or threats).
- Send a copy of your letter to your Chapter office so they can track the legislator's responsiveness.

To write to a Member of Congress:

The Honorable
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable _____
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Doe, Dear Congressman (woman) Doe,

To write to a Governor or state legislator:

The Honorable
State House, Room ____
Your State Capitol, Zip

Dear Representative/Senator/Governor Doe,

CALLING AN ELECTED OFFICIAL

Elected officials and other government decision-makers pay attention when citizens take the time to call and express their views on an issue. It may be quicker and easier than writing. If an issue is moving fast, it may be the only way to get your message through in time to make an impact. The Chapter sends out action alerts when we need advocates to call their legislators in support of certain legislation. To sign up for these alerts contact Margaux Gillespie at margaux.gillespie@alz.org or 206.363.5500.

TIPS

- Prepare your remarks before you call.
- Don't be surprised if you don't speak to the official directly. Staff who answer or respond to the majority of constituent calls have the official's "ear" and will see that your comments are recorded and passed on.
- Identify yourself as a constituent.
- Say exactly what you are calling about (bill number, issue, etc.).
- Say what you want the official to do, such as vote against a budget cut, or sign a respite bill.
- Leave your name, address and phone number.
- Be positive and avoid debating at length.

Calling local offices of federal or state officials is o.k., but calling their capitol office carries more punch.

To call a member of the U.S. Senate or House, call (202) 224-3121 and ask for her/him by name.

For a state official, call the number listed on their legislative website. Individual websites can be accessed through www.leg.wa.gov under legislator information.

Call the White House and register your opinion with the President by calling (202) 456-1111 any day between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time.