

# Utah School Employees Association *Action Bulletin*

*Breaking news for members of USEA*

## ***HOW TO LOBBY YOUR LEGISLATOR***

First, learn the legislative process. The Legislature has documents available which step you through the process and are available for free from the following website: <http://le.utah.gov/lrgc/citizenguide.htm>

Second, start early in the session and don't assume anything. Find out about standing committees and appropriations committees and who serves on them. Many decisions are made there. If you wish to speak at a committee hearing, let the chairman know. You may be put on the agenda or told to appear. Be prepared to speak when time is allowed for public input. You may want to attend other meetings before hand just to get a flavor of how things go. When you attend the meeting and if you see the committee is in favor of your position, don't feel you are compelled to speak. If you can get what you want without opening your mouth, so much the better than saying something that clouds the issue and puts your position in peril.

If you wish to visit your legislator during the general session, go to the State Capitol's third floor where there are people who will send a message into the appropriate chamber letting your legislator know that you wish to visit with him. Don't panic if there is no immediate response. Your legislator may come out himself, send out a note or have an intern come talk with you. If you need to visit with your legislator personally, request a time when you can meet. Set a specific time and length of time you need. Although a face to face meeting may be best, a letter may suffice or be a prelude to a meeting.

Keep letters to a single page. If you must exceed one page, make the second page an attachment which elaborates on your one-page summary. Be absolutely sure you spell the legislator's name correctly and have the right address. If you don't, you may have lost your audience.

Clearly identify the issue (or bill) you are writing about, and only discuss one issue or bill per letter. Keep your letter simple and straight forward. Use everyday language and don't assume he or she even knows about the issue, let alone be well informed about the issue. The legislature considers well over 600 bills annually in addition to the State's budget.

Don't assume any decisions have been made. Give definite and concise reasons for your position. Be specific. A few facts and figures supporting your position will be more effective than just stating your opinion. Explain the impact of the legislation or issue on you and other constituents. What needs are being met, or unmet? Provide facts. Suggest, don't demand, a course of action. Don't promise rewards or offer threats, and don't knock the opposition. Nobody responds well to threats.

Offer your services and time for follow up and more in-depth study. If a legislator is sympathetic to your cause, he or she may need more information quickly and may be willing to meet with you or your group. Be constructive. If you have expert knowledge or wide experience on the subject of your letter, let the legislator know of your expertise. Don't be condescending—be forthright and helpful. Ask, tactfully, for a response if you expect one, and provide a return address or phone number. Utah's Legislature is a part-time legislature (even if some of them spend 30-40 hours a week on legislative tasks and issues). Express your appreciation—say thanks.

**Legislative Contact Information on Back**



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## **Legislative Contact Information**

You can contact your State Representatives and Senators by phone, email or letter. The important thing is that legislators hear from you, their constituent. Be respectful but let them know what you think.

### **If you need assistance in contacting your legislators**

Call USEA at 801-269-9320, go to the USEA website at [www.useautah.org](http://www.useautah.org), or email us [information@useautah.org](mailto:information@useautah.org)

### **House of Representatives**

Phone: 801-538-1029

Website: <http://www.le.state.ut.us/house/members/membertable1add.asp>

### **Senate**

Phone: 801-538-1035

Website: <http://www.utahsenate.org/roster.html>

**To find out who your Senator or Representative is visit:**

<http://www.utahsenate.org/map.html>