



## **Tips for reaching out to your elected officials**

So that you can make an impact for animals!

### **1. Find out who your elected officials are**

ALDF has a great tool for this; you can [click this link](#) to figure out who your legislators are. In order to get an accurate result, you must input your entire address. Sometimes multiple congressional districts cover one city and you want to make sure you're reaching out to the correct representatives. You'll get state and federal elected officials for your results, so make sure you're reaching out to the correct ones. The results page will provide their email addresses and phone numbers.

### **2. Research your legislators before outreach**

Before doing any outreach, learn more about your elected officials. Research their voting records, learn about their campaign platforms and what they stand for. Look up their stance on animal issues and figure out which animal issues they care about most. It can also be helpful to scroll through their social media accounts to see if they have any companion animal family members or are involved in any district/community activities involving animals.

### **3. Know your issues**

Make sure that you've spent time properly learning and reviewing the issues you're going to be speaking about and you have a basic level of knowledge on your topics. There is no need to become an expert – it is always ok to tell your elected official or their staff that you'll get back to them with more information – but it helps to be able to succinctly explain your issue and why it matters to you.

### **4. Outreach**

When reaching out to a legislative office for the first time, it is important to note that you are a constituent and include your address, even on emails. Otherwise, the office has no way of verifying that you are indeed a constituent and the part of their district where you reside.

#### **a. Email message**

If emailing a legislative office, be sure to include the information above and include a clear ask. For instance, you could say "My name is X, I'm a constituent and I'm asking you to support the Pigs and Public Health Act, H.R.4757." If possible, include both the name of the bill and the bill number. You can also add reasons why you'd like them to support the bill.

#### **b. Phone calls**

When calling a state or federal office, you will likely get a staff member answering the phone. You can give a quick message to this staff member and they will record it/tally it for

the legislator. You can keep your phone message very brief; even a 30 second phone call from a constituent is effective. You can say essentially the same message covered in emails: “My name is X, I’m a constituent and I’m asking you to support the Pigs and Public Health Act, H.R 4757, because...” but you can include a little bit more context since you’ll actually be speaking with someone. Don’t forget to thank the staff member for their time before you hang up.

**c. Meeting requests**

You can call or email your legislator to request a meeting. You can simply tell them you’re a constituent and would like to request a meeting with your representative to discuss an issue that is important to you. They will likely ask for your name and address. If you have a specific issue or bill that you would like to discuss, you should note what it is so that staff can properly prepare for your meeting. Group visits with fellow constituents are particularly effective and increase your chances of getting an appointment.

If you are requesting a meeting with a federal legislator, you will likely meet with staff. In federal offices, staff members are generally the ones who meet with stakeholders and they will be the people you need to convince in order to get your request passed up to the legislator. So treat meetings with staff with the same level of respect and professionalism that you would a member themselves. At the state level, you may meet with either staff or the legislator depending on scheduling and preference.

Plan to discuss only one or two issues and have your material in front of you for reference. Since you will have limited time to speak with the legislator or staff member, know what issues you want to address and stick to them. State your position as succinctly and simply as possible and ask for a clear answer on where your legislator stands on the issue. You can find resources and talking points on the ALDF website, as well as handouts for the meeting.

Should you be asked a question that you are unsure of, don’t hesitate to say, “I don’t know, but I will get back to you.” Simply write down the question and let them know you will get back to them later.

If a legislator agrees to support your request, please thank them for taking that action. It is important for legislators to receive positive feedback which may inspire a legislator to support future animal protection issues.

After the meeting, follow up via email with any answers to questions or handouts that you discussed during the meeting. And don’t forget to include an additional thank you for their time!