



Effective Contact with Elected Officials

How to find your elected officials and connect activists with theirs:

Often people don't contact their elected officials about important issues because they don't know who they are or how to reach them. That part is easy for you as an organizer to facilitate. It is most effective to communicate with the elected officials who represent you, not those from other districts. To find out who represents you in Minnesota and in Washington, enter your address into the district finder at <http://www.gis.leg.mn/iMaps/districts/> and you'll get a list of all of your state and federal representatives.

In order of effectiveness, you can contact your elected official by:

1. Meeting them in person
2. Calling on the phone
3. Writing a personal letter or postcard
4. Writing a personal email
5. Sending a form letter or email
6. Posting on social media

The **Indivisible** movement has created a very informative step-by-step guide for individuals, groups, and organizations who want to make change in Congress by lobbying their elected officials. The lessons in the guide can be applied to any campaign to influence elected officials.

You can find the guide here: <https://www.indivisibleguide.com/guide/>

How to have a conversation with an elected official:

You never know when you're going to have an opportunity to speak to your elected officials. You may get invited to a formal meeting organized by an advocacy organization, or you may bump into them at the grocery store. You should be prepared and prepare your fellow nurses to have a quick "elevator" conversation ready for those occasions. You can tailor it for the occasion, so a story in a formal meeting is different from a comment at a town hall meeting and different from bumping into your legislator in the produce aisle. The important things to remember:

- Introduce yourself: let them know who you are, where you live in their district. They will be more motivated to talk to you when they know you can vote for them. Also let them know you're a nurse and where you work or worked.
- Know your audience: the message will be different for a conservative Republican than a liberal Democrat. If you're talking to a Republican, you could focus on the waste of private and public dollars in the market-based healthcare system. If you're talking to a liberal, you could focus on values of equality, justice and healthcare as a human right.
- Be specific and get to the issue quickly: "I am really concerned about our broken healthcare system and we need single payer to fix it." If you are talking about a specific bill, mention it by name and number (if you know it). "I support Senator Marty's Minnesota Health Plan, SF219, because it guarantees healthcare for all and lowers costs for patients and taxpayers."
- Ask for their support. Get an answer! "Will you support Senator Marty's Minnesota Health Plan?" Listen carefully to their answer. If they say no, figure out what is holding them back. If they say "yes, but" or "maybe" listen for the conditions they need before they'll agree.
- If they need more information you don't have, contact a member of the steering committee at HCAMN on <http://healthcareforallmn.org> for follow up.
- Thank them and end on a positive note! Always be nice, even if you strongly disagree with everything the elected official just said. You are representing healthcare advocates around the state and should always take the high road.