

COMMUNITY FOOD SECURITY COALITION



Making Policy Work for You: Tips for Calling Your Legislators

Federal policy can affect the work you do, whether it's through school lunch regulations, access to locally grown foods, or farm conservation that affects our clean air and water. Since policy can influence you, it's important to stay informed and let your legislators know how you feel. Remember that you have a valuable local perspective to share! Policymakers need to hear from individuals and community groups to better understand the way federal policies affect real people and their communities.

Before the Call take a few minutes to prepare. Calls to Hill offices are usually brief, so you will want to have crucial facts, such as bill numbers in front of you.

If you are calling to do something straightforward, such as asking them to vote yes or no on an amendment or co-sponsor a bill, talk with the receptionist. State your name and where you live, so they know you are a constituent. Then make your request succinctly.

- Example Call Script: "My name is ____ (your name), and I live in ____ (town, state). I am calling to ask that Senator/Representative ____ (your senator or representative) support \$50 million in mandatory funding for farm to school programs under Section 122 of the Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act. This funding would help schools and farmers overcome current barriers of getting fresh local produce into school cafeterias. Farm to School programs improve the health of our children while also economically benefitting farmers and the local economy.

If you are calling about something more complex, or if you are calling representing a larger organization, you should ask for the staff person in charge of the issue about which you are calling.

Again, state your name, where you are from, and whom you represent. Ask about your legislator's position on the issue. If it aligns with yours, thank the staff member for their support. If the position does not, take a moment to explain your position, offer to send more information, and ask that the Congressperson consider the issue further.

- You might find that the person you talk to is not familiar with the issue you are calling about. In that case, take a moment to educate them about the issue and to explain why you are asking their boss to take a certain position. Offer to send more information, and remember to follow-up promptly. This can be a great opportunity to become someone on whom staff relies for information about your issue.

Leaving a message

If you are leaving a message, state your name, where you are from, phone number, and a short message about the issue you are calling about and the action you would like your Congressperson to take.