

# USE YOUR VOICE

Change Your World

## Three most common ways to contact elected officials

1. E-mail
2. Mailed letter
3. Personal phone call

## And the winner is — Personal Phone Call.

- A phone call counts as 28 people *who agree with you!*
- A personal letter counts as 15 people *who agree with you!*
- An e-mail counts as 3 people. Period.

## How your correspondence is handled . . .

### E-MAILS:

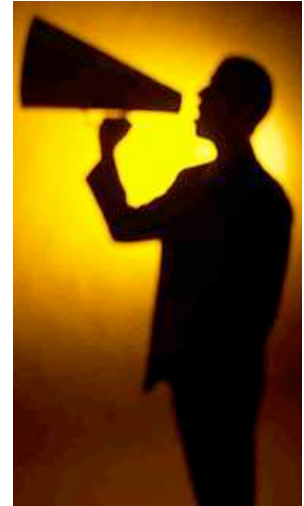
- Congressional representatives receive 10,000<sup>+</sup> e-mails a day!
- Automated programs sort them and send automated responses.
- A daily report shows the number of people who e-mailed on each issue—but **not** how many are for or against an issue.
- No human ever reads e-mails.

### MAILED LETTERS

- Your congressional representatives receive 5,000 to 6,000 letters every week.
- All letters are opened and read by at least two staff people.
- The issue and the person's stand—for or against the issue—are recorded and then a form letter is sent to the writer.
- About 10 exceptional letters a week receive special treatment by being personally read and signed by your representative.

### PHONE CALLS

- Each congressional office receives 400-600 calls a day from constituents.
- Every call is either answered by a staff person or by an answering machine.
- Either way, a staff person will take notes about your call—your issue and your stance on the issue.
- In addition, some of your actual words may be quoted at a staff meeting with your representative, and you will be counted among those who took time to call and voice your opinion.



Sources: "How to Make Your Letters to Capitol Hill Count," The National Center for Public Policy Research, Washington, D.C. <http://www.nationalcenter.org/how0725.htm> and "Make Sure Your Voice is Heard," GHEA, <http://www.ghea.org/pages/articles/focus.php?ID=21&parent=32>

## Use Your Voice: Change Your World

### A Versatile, Effective Message Structure

- Greeting
- Your name
- Where you live - You're a constituent
- The issue you are concerned about
- Why you are concerned
- The action you want your representative to take

### How to Get Back on Track

- What I'm most concerned about is . . .
- I'm not a policy expert, but what I do know is . . .
- I don't know every provision in that bill, but I believe that . . .
- I haven't looked into that aspect, but what's most important to me is . . .
- What I'd like the Senator to remember is . . .
- What I want to focus on is . . .
- Let me tell you what I do know. . .



Virginia Organizing  
2012

## Use Your Voice: Change Your World Web Resources

### Find contact information for your Congressional Representative and U.S. Senators

Contacting the Congress

<http://www.contactingthecongress.org>

### Find contact information for your Virginia Delegate and Senator

Virginia General Assembly: Who's My Legislator?

<http://onview.state.va.us/whosmy.nsf/main?openform>

(Or Google "Virginia General Assembly" and click Who's My Legislator)

### Find an organization and join forces

Political Advocacy Groups directory from Washington State University

<http://pag.vancouver.wsu.edu>

On the Web: <http://virginia-organizing.org>

Follow on Facebook: Virginia Organizing

Follow on Twitter: @VAOrganizing





Use Your Voice  
Change Your World

Virginia Organizing

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Virginia Organizing

- Non partisan, non profit
- Based in Charlottesville
- Chapters in 12 communities
- Fosters civic engagement by ordinary citizens
- Promotes social justice
- Real People. Real Change.



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Our voices *do* count. It's time  
to make ourselves heard.



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An email counts as 3 opinions received *period*.

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A mailed letter counts as 15 people *who agree with you*.

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And the winner is . . .

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A phone call counts as 28 people *who agree with you.*

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- Greeting
- Your name
- Where you live
- The issue you are concerned about
- Why you are concerned
- The action you want your representative to take

This structure works for any issue and method of communication.



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### How to Get Back on Track

What I'm most concerned about is . . .

I'm not a policy expert, but what I do know is . . .


I don't know every provision in that bill, but I believe that . . .

I haven't looked into that aspect, but what's most important to me is . . .

What I'd like the Senator to remember is . . .

What I want to focus on is . . .

Let me tell you what I do know . . .



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**You can do this!**

- Use the structure to focus and organize your thoughts
- Rehearse
- Keep your notes close at hand
- Get back on track if you have to
- Don't forget: You're the boss!




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**Get Organized!**

- There's strength in numbers
- Get past the gatekeepers and the boilerplate
- Get help with strategic timing of your contact
- Work with *Virginia Organizing* for social justice
- Or find a group that you can work with

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[www.paq.vancouver.wsu.edu](http://www.paq.vancouver.wsu.edu)

**Political Advocacy Groups**  
A Directory of United States Lobbyists

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 [News Citations](#) | 
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**Subjects**

- Abortion & Reproduction
- Aged Population
- Alcohol, Tobacco & Drugs
- Animal Rights & Welfare
- Business, Labor & Economics
- Children
- Civil Rights
- Consumer Advocacy
- Corporate Accountability
- Criminal Justice
- Disabled
- Education
- Environment (General)
- Animal Rights & Welfare
- Land Use
- Water Resources
- Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, & Transgender
- General Liberal & Conservative Groups
- Government Reform
- Gun Control

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Questions?

On the Web: [virginiaorganizing.org](http://virginiaorganizing.org)  
Follow on Facebook: Virginia Organizing Project  
Follow on Twitter: VAOrganizing



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