

*Welcome to
the
Idaho
Legislature*



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Joining Together for Quality Early Care and Education

Did you know? An investment in quality training for child care providers and preschool teachers returns approximately \$7 to the tax payers for every dollar spent.

When you invest in quality care:

Children succeed: More high school graduates, less teen pregnancy, more college students, less special education and grade retention, more high quality jobs.

Parents are productive: Less absenteeism and turnover at work; more secure employees.

Communities thrive: More jobs, more economic stimulation, more educated work force, more motivated employees, a more promising future.

Sample Letter Format

Your Address
City, State, and Zip

Date

The Honorable John L. Jones
Idaho State Senator
Statehouse
P.O. Box 83720
Boise, ID 83720-0081

Dear Senator Jones:

Letter Goes Here

Sincerely,

Your Name
Title: Parent or Position

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Information Every First Time Voter Needs to Know

Who needs to register?



Any eligible person who wishes to vote in Idaho and has never voted here, or who has changed his or her name or address.

How do I know if I'm eligible to vote?



You're eligible if you will be at least 18 years old on election day (the first Tuesday in November), are a U.S. citizen, and if you have lived in Idaho and in the county for at least 30 days. You are not eligible if you are under a guardianship, have been convicted of a felony and have not had your civil rights restored, or are in prison on conviction of a criminal offense.

Once I register, do I need to register again for the next election?



No, as long as you vote at least once every 4 years in a primary or general election and do not move.

Can I register to vote by mail?



Usually the answer is yes, but contact your county clerk for information and applications. You may also find registration application online at various web sites.

The first sentence of the testimony should include your name and occupation, as well as the name of the group on whose behalf you are testifying (if appropriate), and should conclude with the bill number, title, and subject of the hearing. The second sentence should identify any persons accompanying you.

The first paragraph should summarize the major arguments in favor of your position. *Next*, explain each argument in detail, and be sure to suggest alternatives for these areas of legislation you oppose or wish to see improved. Remember your credibility as a witness is derived primarily from your professional and/or personal knowledge base. Thus, your own personal or professional experience (entwined with other factual information) will provide the best possible supporting evidence for your position. *In the final paragraph*, thank the committee members for their past achievements on behalf of your organization (if appropriate) and offer your continued assistance on this and future issues.

Usually, each witness is given a time limit (often as brief as three minutes) for presenting his or her information. Try to keep your remarks within the limit by summarizing your major arguments and focusing on a few of the most important points. More extensive evidence supporting your view can be submitted for the record and distributed to committee members and staff for their perusal at a later time. In general, try to bring enough copies of your testimony to provide one for the record, one for each committee member, and about 10 to 15 for other people attending the hearing.

If you have promised during the hearing to provide the members with additional information, please do so as soon as possible, while your testimony is still fresh in their minds, and the issue is relevant.






Preparing Testimony

Legislative committee hearings provide an excellent opportunity for parents, educators, and others concerned with the education of children and families to present their point of view. A hearing also provides a means of attracting legislative and public support, and assuring that local, state, and federal governments consider progressive legislation.


Before the hearing, you (the witness) should know specifically what the committee is considering, i.e., whether a few segments of a particular issue or the entire issue. **In addition**, you should be familiar with any arguments or information used by those who oppose your position, and must be able to answer questions from a committee member who may hold an opposing view. You must also be able to clearly delineate the reasons for your position and provide supporting evidence (including statistics, surveys, and authoritative reports), even if the legislative committee does not request lengthy and in-depth materials and answers.

Testimony should be written only after all data has been gathered and conferences have been held with key persons in the field. Whenever possible, drafts should also be shared with several persons in the field. At the hearing, you may be accompanied by another person to assist in answering questions. The testimony should include a cover page which contains: the subject (or name of the bill) on which you are testifying; the name of the Committee; the date of the hearing; and your name, position, the name of the organizations(s) on whose behalf you are testifying, and an address where you can be reached.


What does residence address mean?

 You can register to vote only in the precinct where your residence is located. Your residence is where you live.


How will I know that my application has been processed and I am registered?

 You will receive a mailed notice from the county verifying your address and telling you the precinct you vote in.


Where do I go to vote?

 You can call your county clerk to find out the address of the polling place for your precinct.

Can I register to vote at the polls on election day?

 Yes. You must bring acceptable proof of residence, such as a driver's license or state or military ID card, and a utility receipt, rent receipt or a current student identification card.

What if I have more questions or need to clarify my personal situation?

 Contact your county elections clerk, listed in the government pages in the phone book or listed online at Idaho's election internet site.

Here's the online address for Idaho:

<http://www.state.id.us>

Fax 208-334-2282 or phone 334-2852.



Profile of an Elected Official

1. *They are generalists.* This has something to do with the amount they can absorb.
2. *They have healthy egos.* It goes with the job description.
3. *They are verbal learners.* An example would be the public hearing process.
4. *They develop short, but intense, concentration spans.*
5. *They need feedback and reinforcement.* . . . just like everyone else.
6. *They think in “sound bites”.*
7. *They are primarily people oriented* rather than concept or thing oriented.
8. *They portray unlimited energy,* even when totally exhausted.
9. *They are psychosocial gifted extroverts.* This seems to predominate over the cognitively gifted introvert.
10. *They like real situations, onsite visits.*
11. *They are family oriented.* They really do like kissing babies.
12. *Most of them relish a good fight for a good cause.*



State your case clearly and concisely. Give specific reasons why you believe a bill is necessary and why it warrants support - or why you oppose the passage of a bill.



If you are writing on behalf of an organization or in an official capacity, use printed letterhead. It gives your communication dignity and stature.



Always remember to sign your given name and surname.



Don't demand action or imply threats.



Be factual. Don't exaggerate.



Be polite.



Be careful of your spelling, handwriting and grammar.



Be understanding of the total picture.



Unless you specifically need information, it is often a good idea to indicate that you do not expect an answer or reply.



Legislators keep track of mail they receive.









Legislators are most responsive to registered voters **in their own district**. However, committee chairpersons appreciate knowing how different areas of the state feel.



Tips on Letter Writing

A letter to a legislator is important. A single letter might be the difference between the success or failure of a key piece of legislation.

-  Make sure that the full name, initial and title of the legislator are correct. “Minor” errors can be extremely significant.
-  Formality is the safest course in correspondence - unless you are on very good terms with the legislator.
-  Clearly identify the bill you support or oppose. Identify each bill by number and title.
-  Localize your letter. Express your views in terms of what the proposed bill means to your community, your school district, center or business.
-  Supply the legislator with factual information about your local program and community situation.
-  Be concise. Don't waste words.

13. *They hate to lose.*

14. *They positively levitate* when presented with a good case of cost-effectiveness.

15. *They do not presume to be experts.* Just let them be good advocates.

16. *They are determined to make their personal mark.* They want a piece of the action.

17. *They have to think about the next election.* They want to think about the next generation.

18. *They have a “sixth sense” for timing.* They know when to seize the moment.

19. *They need money.*

20. *You have a much better chance with the elected official than with the staff.*

21. *They have bad days*—stomach aches, colds and low moods.



Common Questions Asked about the Legislature

1. How do I call my legislator?

To leave a message during the session, call 334-2000 or toll free 1-800-626-0471.

2. How do I write my legislator?

Write them by title (Senator or Representative), name, address to the Idaho State Legislature, P.O. Box 83702, Boise, 83720-0038(House) or 83720-008 1 (Senate).

3. How do I email my legislator?

Log on to www.state.id.us. Under *Your Government*, click on *Legislature* and then *How to Contact a Legislator*. You can search by legislative district, name, or committee; simply click on your representative,s name to send a message.

4. Where do I get a copy of a bill?

Copies can be obtained from the service window at the legislative mailroom in the basement of the Capitol or call the information number listed above.

5. Do I need to know the bill's number?

Yes. That's how the bills are filed and retrieved.

6. How do I find out a bill's number?

If you haven't been following legislation regarding the bill, call legislative information services. Or pick up a **Mini Data** at the Information Centers on the third or fourth floors of the Capitol. These pamphlets are printed daily and list the bills, the ID numbers and the previous day's action.

7. **Ask** the legislator if s/he will support your particular bill. Refer to the bill by number.

8. **Remind** them about any upcoming activities that include them (e.g. The Head Start Legislative reception).

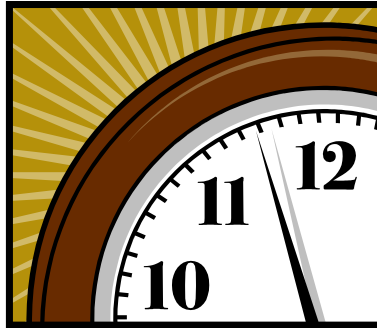
9. **Give** them copies of fact sheets (if you haven't already) and thank them again for their time.

Remember:

- ✓ Be a solid source of information.
- ✓ Be generous with praise.
- ✓ Be careful about closing doors.
Refrain from arguing.



What to do in a Ten Minute Meeting



1. **Thank** the legislator for taking the time to meet with you.
2. Have everyone in the group **introduce** themselves.
3. Have the group leader **explain** what you want from the legislator. (For example: We want you to support expanding each Head Start Program by one classroom.)
4. **Present** your top points in an orderly fashion (hopefully predetermined and assigned to individuals ahead of time).
5. **Give** the legislator the opportunity to respond and ask questions.
6. **Listen** to the legislator's responses and queries, and respond appropriately. Do not let yourself get sidetracked, keep pulling the conversation back to the points you want to make. Make mental notes of areas of disagreement so you can strengthen your case in the follow-up letter or with additional information.

7. Can I get copies of bills on the internet?

Bills can be retrieved by computer via the internet. Access the State of Idaho web page at www.state.id.us



8. How do I know when a committee is going to take up a certain issue?

Agendas are public information, and are required by law to be available 24 hours in advance of the meeting. People should contact the secretary of the committee they are interested in following.

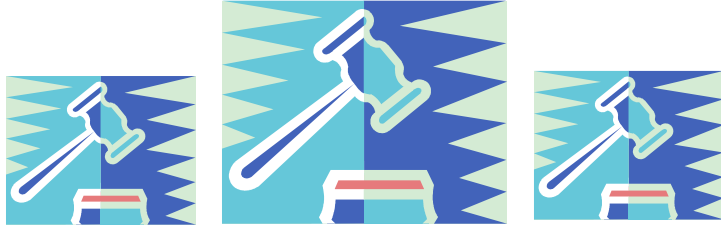
9. Can I go and watch a committee discuss an issue?

Yes, all committee meetings are open to the public. The only meetings that are not public are meetings of the party caucuses.

10. Is it best to get there early? If so, how early?

If the meeting is on a controversial issue, seating could be at a premium. Being 15 minutes early should be adequate for most meetings. As the session wears on and House and Senate floor debates heat up, meetings are sometimes delayed at the last minute until the floor debates are finished.

(more questions →)



More Common Questions ...

11. Can I participate?

To participate in a committee hearing, you need to get on a list to testify. To do that, call the committee secretary in advance of the meeting. You can also sign up to testify the day of the meeting. Time limits for speaking to a committee depend on how many people also wish to speak and how much time the committee has for the meeting. Debates on the floor take precedence over committee meetings. You can also submit your comments in writing to the committee secretary.

12. Where do I sit when I visit a committee?

Legislators sit at the main table, and extra seating is usually available in chairs set round the perimeter of the committee room.

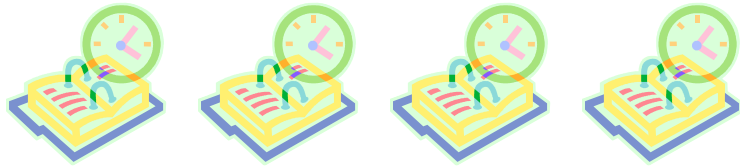
13. How do I know when lawmakers will debate certain legislation on the floor of the House or Senate?

Legislation up for debate is listed on the House and Senate calendar. Debate is allowed when a bill is up for a third reading, and the calendar lists bills when they are up for second and third reading.

Meeting with your Legislator in Person



- ◆ **Do** make your appointment in advance.
- ◆ **Do** be prepared, dress neatly, be polite and brief.
- ◆ **Do** state, in your first sentence, who you are, who you represent, what you want to discuss, and what you want your legislator to do.
- ◆ **Do** leave a one page fact sheet summarizing your points, including your name, address and phone. More detailed information should be included as attachments.
- ◆ If you do not know the answer to a question, **do** offer to find the answer and forward the information IMMEDIATELY.
- ◆ **Do** try to find out where your legislator stands on your issue.
- ◆ **Do** be prepared for delays or cancellations.
- ◆ **Do** follow-up by writing a thank you note for his/her time and restate your position.



Making an Appointment with your Legislators

DO'S AND DON'T'S

- ◆ **Do** make an appointment
- ◆ **Don't** arrive unexpectedly and expect to see the official
- ◆ **Do** be on time for the visit
- ◆ **Don't** be late for the visit
- ◆ **Do** be positive and friendly
- ◆ **Don't** be upset if your member can't see you personally
- ◆ **Do** state the reason for your visit
- ◆ **Don't** try to discuss too many different issues
- ◆ **Do** provide reliable data/facts to support your position
- ◆ **Don't** give incorrect information

14. Where do I go to watch this debate?

The public can watch from the fourth floor gallery of either the House or Senate.

15. Can I ever go down and watch the legislature in action over my lunch hour?

The Legislature adjourns for lunch, so there are no meetings to attend between noon and 1 p.m.

16. Are there any key days to visit the legislature?

The first day of the session, the Governor is invited to address a joint session of the Legislature to deliver his State of the State address. In that speech he discusses the state's economy and his legislative priorities.

On the third day of the session, the Governor delivers a budget message to another joint session, where he outlines how to pay for the priorities he outlined on the first day. The legislature then starts meeting in committees to propose legislation, and the floor debates gets going in earnest in late February and into March, toward the end of the session.

17. Where do I park?

Depending upon the time of day, you may be able to find a metered parking space near the capitol. But keep close watch on your time or you will be ticketed. If you are unsure about how long you will be in the Statehouse, or the Legislature is running on time, you may prefer to park in one of the downtown parking garages.

Educating Legislators

Legislators have emphasized that communications are effective in this order:



1. Personal visits by Legislators in their community (Them to You)
 2. Personal visits in hometown (You to Them)
 3. Personal visits at the Capitol
 4. Telephone calls
 5. Telegrams
 6. Letters
- (Note: We haven't asked them about e-mail)

Personal Visits: The best communication is face-to-face. Here are the steps to follow:

- * Get to know your legislator ahead of time, especially during the campaign.
- * Set up an appointment for your legislator to actually visit a program in your community. Make sure that someone is with you to explain how legislation or funding will help the people and the program being visited.
- * Make an appointment to visit your legislator. If you drop in without an appointment, you may miss the legislator; you may have to wait a very long time; you may force them to postpone something they need to finish, creating negative feelings instead of goodwill.
- * Introduce yourself, even at the second or third meeting. Don't put the legislator in an awkward position of having to ask your name. When you remember how many people a legislator meets in a day, you realize they may not remember your name.

Persuasive Phone Calls:

- * **Write it down.** Make and use notes when leaving a message for legislators or talking directly to them. Keep the notes close by so you'll be prepared when they return your call. Refer to bill numbers.
- * **Be timely.** Phone calls are best right before votes when you don't have time to write.
- * **Be short.** Gauge the degree of detail and length of your conversation by how much interest the legislator shows. Typically, you should limit your phone calls to two or three minutes.
- * **Identify yourself.** Make sure you give your name, city and district
- * **Call the Legislative Information Center** to leave-a message for your legislator.



Dial 1-800-626-0471 or 334-2000
e-mail: infocntr@iso.state.id.us
FAX-208-334-5397

Adapted from materials produced by Friends of the Earth and Idaho Rivers United.

Effective Citizen Lobbying

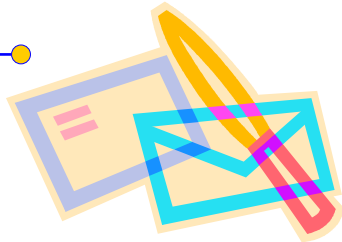
Persuasive Letters:

- * **Be brief and to the point.** Stick to a single topic and limit your message to one page.
- * **Use your own words.** Personal letters are much more effective than form letters. It's okay to hand write the letter, just be sure it's legible.
- * **Be specific.** Ask for a clear commitment. Include the bill number if there is one.
- * **Identify yourself.** Make sure you include your name and address, your business or occupation if relevant, and your legislative district.
- * **Address your letter properly:**
The Honorable Senator (Last Name)
Idaho State Senate
P.O. Box 83720
Boise, ID 83720-0081

Dear Senator _____

Or

The Honorable Representative (Last Name)
Idaho State House of Representatives
P.O. Box 83720
Boise, ID 83720-0038



- * Get down to business quickly. Chat a little, but as quickly as possible, tell them why you are there and what you want them to do.
- * Be brief; be direct; be simple. In an early visit give a quick outline of the total legislative program for the year. As bills come up for consideration, explain specific issues at the appropriate time. Discuss only one issue per visit.
- * Leave simple materials with the legislator. Don't dump volumes of material on them. You might leave detailed information for their staff to study.

Telephone calls: Telephone calls do not substitute for face-to-face visits. They can be used if rapport has already been established with the legislator. Remember the legislator's time is valuable. Identify yourself first, and get down to business quickly.

Telegrams: Telegrams (or e-mail) can be used for quick, important messages. The advantages of telegrams is that they always get through and they are something the legislator can "show around". The disadvantages of telegrams are that they are expensive and that the message is very short. If you have more than 24 hours to make contact, use Western Union's mail-o-gram. You may send a 50 word message for approximately \$4.00.

Thank you notes: Always write to thank the legislator for seeing you, for voting as you had hoped they would, and for doing anything else in your interest. This should be an unbreakable rule. The importance of saying thank you cannot be overemphasized.

Effective Citizen Lobbying

Meeting with legislators

Before the appointment::

- * **Do your homework.** Know about the politician's voting record and public views on issues that relate to your cause.
- * **Prepare background materials.** Summarize your points in a one page fact sheet that you can leave with the person you are educating.
- * **Practice your argument.** Get your message down to a few key points.

During the meeting:

- * **Open on a friendly note.** Mention something you have in common. Whenever possible, thank the politician for something they have said or done in the past.
- * **Make your case.** Briefly state the problem and explain why action is necessary. Be specific about what you want the legislator to do.
- * **Be candid.** If a legislator asks you a question that you can't answer, don't bluff! Follow up with the information the politician needs.

- * **Pay close attention.** Notice how your arguments are being received. If a legislator is wavering, ask about their concerns. Try to pick up clues about whom else he or she has heard from and what other pressures they might be facing.
- * **Get a clear commitment.** If you can't get a firm answer, find out what additional information the legislator needs to make a decision.

After the Meeting:

- * **Jot down some notes about what happened.** Keep track of any arguments or objections the politicians may have raised that need your follow-up.
- * **Send a thank you letter .** Let the legislator know that you appreciate their time, and restate any commitments that were made. Include additional information if appropriate.

