

# Be an Advocate

## Contact Your Senator

Virginia state senators rarely hear from their constituents on issues. Getting a personal letter or a phone call from one will cause a senator to pay attention to the issue. Your voice helps personalize the issue and give weight to your voice. It might also be the reason he or she votes the right way. Do your homework and organize your thoughts!

## -Get Started-

- **Know where your senator stands on the issue:** Check <https://lis.virginia.gov/> to see if your current senator is sponsoring the bill so that you know whether or not to say thank you.
- **Bring a subject matter expert:** NWPC-VA can help you prepare for the meeting. Just drop us a line at [va.nwpc@gmail.com](mailto:va.nwpc@gmail.com) and we'll be glad to help!
- **If you plan to meet in person, make an appointment:** Check the contact information for your senator <https://whosmy.virginiageneralassembly.gov/>
- **If you plan to call:** give your name and address and ask whoever takes your call to let the member of the Virginia legislature know that you favor or oppose something. Our *advocacy toolkit* also has a sample script for contacting your senator.
- **If you plan to email:** make sure you keep your email to the point and personal. You must include your postal mailing address. Be aware that many senators will acknowledge, but not respond to, your message. See an example on our *advocacy toolkit*.

cont.

- **Be disciplined in your messaging:** The best way to build support for a bill is to keep communication positive, nonpartisan, inclusive, and single-issue.
  - Avoid conflating this with other issues you care about.
  - If you are able to schedule an in-person meeting do not wear or bring accessories or materials for other groups or issues.
  - If you meet via Zoom, be mindful of what is in the frame/background when you turn on your video.
  - Encourage your senator to support the bill rather than dwelling on past votes on related topics.
- **Share your story:** Explain why this issue matters to you and how it affects you, your family, and/or your community.
  - I care about \_\_\_\_\_ because . . .
  - Gender Equality: I want my daughter to know she is valued as much as my son.
  - Universal Income: My sister is a single mom and works over 40 hours a week. She also has three children who require daycare. If universal income were available she wouldn't always be in a negative space.
  - Unsolicited Lewds: My job as a real estate agent requires that my phone number be posted in public spaces. I must answer my phone to do my job. I do not want an unsolicited lewd picture appearing on my phone, especially not with my kids in the car.



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