

Shy Person's Guide to Calling Your Representative*

These days you see a lot of requests to call your representatives about issues facing our country. But maybe like me, even though you feel strongly about a subject, you hate calling people SO MUCH, you never pick up the phone. This is a guide for you.

I am anxious on the phone. My blood pressure rises when I need to call a customer service line, or even just ask the hours at a restaurant. So, calling representatives about political issues is one of my least favorite things to do. I posted on Facebook recently about my experience calling my legislative reps and it got a good response. I think there are a lot of us who want to make our voices heard, but we hesitate to pick up the phone. With that in mind, here is my **Shy Person's Guide to Calling Your Representative**.

BEFORE YOU START:

- **Pick an issue.**
- **Know that it is FAST.** It takes maybe 2 minutes to call one person, including the time it takes to look up their phone number. Think of it like ripping off a band aid.
- **Know that you do not have to be persuasive.** You are just calling to put yourself on a tally that will be passed along to your representative. You don't have to convince anyone, and no one will try to argue with you. Just say your piece (as awkwardly as you want...they won't care!) and get off the phone.
- **Know that calling is better than e-mailing.** I would much prefer to email, but your message is more likely to get lost in the deluge. When you talk to a staffer you know for sure that your opinion is being recorded.
- **Find your Senators/Representatives' numbers.** Find out who they are and locate their phone numbers. Call their local lines when possible. Write down the numbers or save them as contacts so you don't have to look them up every time.

DURING THE CALL:

Take a deep breath.

- **Start with an introduction:** I use: "Hi my name is _____ and I'm a constituent of Rep./Sen. _____ calling about a concern I have."
- (I see many scripts that omit how to start the call, and it helps me to know for sure how to begin.) Be sure to say you are a constituent. They might ask for your zip code, so have that ready.
- **Have a script.** This is 100% the best way to keep you focused and calm. There are lots of good scripts you can use, or you can write your own. Say what you are comfortable saying. Remember, you are just calling to be counted.
- **Their responses will vary.** The thing I see missing from most instructions for calling reps is what to expect in their response. Most of the time they will just tell you they will pass on your concern. Congratulations if they do this then you are done! They might read a prepared statement in response. They might even say that your rep is not going to take action on the issue you brought up. What they WON'T do is argue with you or say; "what a stupid thing to be concerned about" Don't let your anxious brain convince you they will do this.
- **If necessary, reiterate your request.** If they read a statement or say the representative will not take action, don't get flustered. Just say, "Once again, I'm calling on the Rep/Sen to _____"
- **Thank the staffer and hang up.**

AFTER THE CALL:

- **Take another deep breath.** You did it!
- **Congratulate yourself.**
- **Know that it gets easier.** The more you call, the more you know what to expect. You may even get to know some staffers. You might never like calling but I promise it gets less awful.
- **Do some self-care.** Do whatever makes you feel happy and rewarded.

* (Editor's note: This article appeared on several websites, and I could not find the actual name of the person who wrote it, therefore there is no attribution.)