

COMMUNITY ADVOCACY GUIDE



CO GOVERNMENT INFORMATION

*Note: Communications with your own elected officials carry the most weight.

Find your legislator: <https://leg.colorado.gov/find-my-legislator>

General Assembly Contact Information: <https://leg.colorado.gov/legislators>

CONTACT

Before communicating with a representative: if applicable check on the status of the bill. **Research the issue and prepare facts you would like to convey. Know exactly what you are requesting. Know your elected official's voting record on similar issues and seek common ground when possible.** Don't hesitate to admit your lack of knowledge on a particular point. Be willing to pursue the answer and report back. When communicating, always be respectful, polite, brief and direct. Always thank a public official for their time and interest in your issue.

Timing

Contact your representative at a strategic time – just before a vote, for instance, or immediately following action by your legislator in support of your cause. Be in touch when you know a particular piece of legislation is pending before a committee or when a bill is about to come before the full House or Senate.

Forms of Contact

A **personal visit** is perhaps the most effective method of sharing your message. You will have established yourself as a known concerned constituent. If your representative is holding some type of event, try to attend. This is a good time to meet informally. If your rep is not available, ask to meet with the legislative assistant.

A **phone call** can be an effective tool. Share your name, address and phone number. Remind the rep of any previous contact. If the rep is not available, speak with the legislative assistant. Comments should be brief and specific. If you know a bill number use it in your comments.

Letters and emails are also important. The

amount of mail on a particular piece of legislation frequently helps determine the reps' approach to an issue. One well-written letter will often prove weightier than a formal petition with many signatures. For this reason, it is generally considered better to express your opinion as an individual rather than as a member of an organization whose positions may already be well known.

Do...

- Address your public official properly.
- Identify yourself immediately at each contact. Officials meet too many people to remember everyone.
- Know the status of the legislation and refer to the bill number whenever possible.
- Use your own words.
- Be brief, explicit, courteous and reasonable.
- Establish your own credentials/expertise on the subject of legislation under consideration.
- Give officials succinct, easy-to-read literature; highlight important facts and arguments. Their time is limited.

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Do...

- Write to the chair or members of a committee holding hearings on legislation in which you are interested if you have facts that you think should influence their thinking.
- Get to know legislators' staff and treat them courteously. Their cooperation can make or break your chances to reach the official themselves.
- Always keep off-the-record comments confidential.
- Write to say you approve, not just to criticize or oppose.
- In a letter include your name and address.
- Keep the door open for further discussion in spite of any apparently negative attitudes.

Don't...

- Begin, "As a citizen and taxpayer" (your elected representative knows we all pay taxes).
- Apologize for taking their time. If you are brief and to the point they will be glad to hear from you.
- Be arrogant, condescending or threatening toward the public official or their staff.
- Argue or back recalcitrant officials into a corner where they take a definite position against you.
- Make notes of a conversation while talking to a legislator.
- Send copies of form letters unless you include a personal note.

About People & Pollinators Action Network:



People and Pollinators Action Network (PPAN) works across Colorado to promote sustainable land management practices, safeguard public health and preserve biodiversity to make our state a safe haven for all who live here—from pollinators to people.

We are the only organization working at the grassroots, municipal, and state levels to advocate for policies and practices that reduce and eliminate the use of pesticides and to create and connect swaths of pollinator-safe habitat with the intent of reversing the drastic decline of pollinator populations—upon which our very existence depends.

Check out our website to learn more:
peopleandpollinators.org

Questions? Email us!
info@peopleandpollinators.org

This community advocacy guide was adapted by PPAN from the League of Woman Voters of Washington:
http://www.lwvwa.org/pdfs/lobby_your_legislator.pdf