

Tips on Communicating with Members of Congress

What is the best way to connect with my member of Congress?

- A personal visit with your member of Congress while s/he is home in Pennsylvania is the best way to make an impact. Visits with members of his/her staff also are very useful.
- A letter – sent to the Member’s district office here in Pennsylvania – can be very effective.
 - A list of Pennsylvania members (with addresses of their district offices) is attached.
 - Model letters to senators Specter and Casey also are attached. Select and copy the portion of the letter you want to use, then paste that into a document to be printed.
- A telephone call to the local district office or to the Washington office is next best.
 - The attached list has telephone numbers for both offices.
- An e-mail message – especially one that you have personalized with information of your own – is effective too.
 - Most members of Congress have a feature on their websites that enables you to write and send e-mail messages.
- Form letters, form e-mails, and petitions also have an impact, but are less effective because they require less commitment on your part and are not personalized.

What is the best way to craft my message?

- First, identify yourself and your place of residence. Then briefly describe your reason for wanting to make contact. Also, briefly describe why this is important to you. If some personal experience shaped your view, briefly describe that experience.
- Sometimes you will have a specific request, such as support for a particular policy or bill. Sometimes you will have only a general concern, such as the need for everyone to have access to affordable health care. Either kind of message is useful to send.
- Ask your member of Congress to describe his/her position on the matter you have brought to his/her attention. Be polite and courteous even if your member does not agree with you.
- Be concise. Simple, clear letters, phone calls and e-mails are the best.

Will my message make any difference?

- It will be reported to your member of Congress by his/her staff. Some letters and e-mails are passed along for him/her to read. So yes, your message has the potential to make a difference.
- If you are a regular voter (and that’s easy for your member of Congress to find out), your messages will be given extra consideration.

The Pennsylvania Health Access Network (PHAN) is a coalition of groups working to improve access to quality health care through the expansion of health insurance coverage. PHAN organizes health care consumers, works to raise public awareness of the need for health system reform, and supports public policy proposals that adhere to the following principles:

- Access to quality health care for all Pennsylvanians;
- Access to affordable, quality health insurance for all Pennsylvanians;
- Effective controls to keep health care and health insurance premiums reasonably priced;
- Shared responsibility for health system costs among individuals, employers and the public.