

Dear CATA Members:

With the advent of term limits and the increased turnover of legislative staff, "grassroots" lobbying efforts have become critical to the success of any legislative program of activities. In an effort to increase our members' knowledge and awareness of the legislative process, the Executive Committee of the California Agricultural Teachers' Association has compiled this material for member use.

This information is intended to serve as a guideline for making personal contact with your hometown legislator. It is important to remember that the best time to get to know your legislator is before you need their help on a critical issue. There is no substitute for personal relationships - invite your legislator to activities that showcase your program and students. You can make a difference - the most effective legislative activity begins at home!

Sincerely,

California Agricultural Teachers' Association
Executive Committee

GUIDELINES TO WRITING YOUR LEGISLATOR

- Make sure your letter is timely. Your letter won't have much impact if it is received after the issue has been voted on.
- Write to your own legislator and to the appropriate committee chairs or members. Understand the structure of the legislature and whom to target.
- Address your letter properly:

The Honorable John Doe
California State Senate
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Jane Doe
California State Assembly
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Senator _____

Dear Assembly Member _____

- Use your own words. Form letters don't have much impact.
- Keep your letter short and clear. Try to limit it to one page.
- Identify bills by title and number.
- State reasons for your position. Relate the issue to your personal well-being or the well-being of your community.
- Be courteous. Legislators and their staffers, like other people, don't respond very positively to threats.
- Contact the CATA office if you require assistance or information. We're here to help.

GUIDELINES FOR DISTRICT VISITS

- Realize that many legislators rely heavily on their staff members for information and advice regarding issues. Getting to know their key staffers in the district can be as helpful as spending time with the legislator.
- Call in advance for an appointment to visit your legislators' district office. If you feel the need to visit personally with your legislator, remember that Friday is usually the only day that they spend in their local community. The legislative schedule is set up so that legislators can usually depart Sacramento and be available to constituents on Fridays.
- If you are visiting to "just get acquainted", limit your visit to a few minutes. If you are meeting to discuss specific legislation or a critical issue, prepare thyself! Know the specific bill numbers of pending legislation and be prepared to educate your legislator or their staff on how this proposed legislation impacts you, your students, and your community.
- Maintain a professional appearance. That doesn't mean that you need to shop for new clothes prior to your visit - just keep in mind that your appearance says a lot about your status as a professional educator. Follow the advice we give to our students - Dress neatly and appropriately for the occasion.
- Leave any written materials that you have prepared with the legislator or staffers. These materials should contain useful facts and other information that remind them of the reason for your visit.
- Ask the legislator for his/her position on the issue and how he/she will vote. Don't take up their valuable time by "preaching to the choir". Express your sincere appreciation for their support and let them know that you intend to let other constituents know of your positive feelings.
- If your position differs from your legislator's, politely express disappointment and offer factual information supporting your views. Avoid getting overly emotional, but don't be afraid to let your legislator know that this is an important issue to you and other constituents.
- Always follow up with a thank-you letter. A short, sincere note of appreciation recognizing their time and attention can pay dividends.