



# CD Government Affairs Advocacy

## Tips on writing, faxing and/or E-mailing your Montana Representative / Senator

A letter, e-mail and/or a Fax to your legislators (Representatives and Senators) is important in addressing your local conservation district positions and the positions of your Montana Association of Conservation Districts. Whether communication is sent during a legislative session or the interim between the Montana Legislature, it is important to craft a brief concise message that carefully provides a summary of concerns (support or oppose) bill #, name of legislation or administrative rule-making.

Communication sent to your Montana legislators is extremely important in positively impacting conservation and natural resource issues. Timely and accurate information is what your legislators need to hear from you and how the legislation positively or negatively impacts you, the landowner / land manager and your local conservation district.

Remember timely and accurate information is key; constructing a strong message makes all the difference in advocating for conservation and natural resource issues.

### Here are a few key tips in writing effective messaging to your Montana legislators:

- **Make sure the full name, initial and title of the legislator are correct.** “Minor” errors can reflect dis-respect and accidental inaccuracy impacts best possible reception to the message and advocacy / lobbying efforts and messaging.
- **Keep your MACD Government Affairs staff and your local conservation district staff aware** of your lobbying efforts; it’s important that they know the volume of government affairs advocacy / lobbying on any given issue.
- **Formality** is the safest course in correspondence... unless you are on more personal terms with the legislator.
- **Clearly identify the bill # you support or oppose.** Identify each bill by number and title. **Concisely provide specific reasons** why you believe the bill warrants support or why you oppose the bill or select passages of the bill. **Write, edit and proof then edit a 2<sup>nd</sup> time before you sign and distribute** (mail, fax or e-mail).
- **Localize your letter / e-mail.** Express your views in terms of what the proposed bill means to your community and your conservation district.
- Provide the legislators **factual (accurate) information and in a timely manner**; local input makes a difference because your legislator respects local constituents –land owner and local conservation district.
- Be careful to not demand action or imply threats. **Keeping communication professional/respectful** ensures that you maintain a healthy rapport with your legislator on this issue and all future issues.
- Note that most legislators attempt to reply to all constituent letters and e-mails in a timely manner. **Legislator demands are many, so if it has been a few weeks since you’ve sent communication, realize they have thousands of communication to address in any given legislative session. To expedite your legislator’s response, do express “please reply” in your correspondence.** It does make a difference. And, legislators do appreciate your participation in the legislative process.

For more information on government affairs advocacy, the current legislative session and/or any other government affairs activities, contact your **Montana Association of Conservation Districts** at (406) 443-5711 or by e-mail to MACD Executive Director Chuck Cornillie at [chuck@macdnet.org](mailto:chuck@macdnet.org).