



## Contacting Your Legislators: Protocol

California state senators and Assembly members want to hear from their constituents—you—the voters in their districts. At times your association may call on you to do some grassroots lobbying. Often, the contact from a district constituent can sway a legislator's vote.

Here are some guidelines for you to follow in contacting your legislators in person, by phone or by letter.

- **Be thoughtful.** Commend the right things which your legislator does. That's the way you'd like to be treated.
- **Be reasonable.** Recognize that there are legitimate differences of opinion. Never indulge in threats or recriminations.
- **Be realistic.** Remember that most controversial legislation is the result of compromise. Don't expect that everything will go your way, and don't be too critical when it doesn't.
- **Be accurate and factual.** The mere fact that you want or do not want a piece of legislation isn't enough. If an issue goes against you, don't rush to blame the legislator for "failing to do what you wanted." Make certain you have the necessary information and do a good job of presenting your case.
- **Be understanding.** Put yourself in a legislator's place. Try to understand his/her problems, outlook and aims. Then you are more likely to help him/her understand your business and problems.
- **Be friendly.** Don't contact your legislator only when you want his/her vote. Invite him/her to your place of business or your group meetings. Take pains to keep in touch with him/her throughout the year.
- **Give credit where it is due.** If an issue goes the way you wanted, remember that your legislator deserves first credit. He/she has the vote, not you. And, remember also that many organizations and individuals participated on your side.
- **Learn to evaluate issues.** The introduction of a legislative bill doesn't mean that it will become law. Whether you're for it or against it, don't get excited about it until you learn the who, what and why of it.
- **Support your legislator.** If he/she is running for re-election and if you believe he/she deserves it, give him/her your support. He/she needs workers and financial supporters. Don't become aloof at the time when your legislator needs your help.
- **Don't, don't, don't even hint that you think certain bills, campaigns or politics in general are not worthwhile or may be dishonest.**
- **Don't demand anything.** And don't be rude or threatening. There is always "the future," and in many cases a legislator may disagree with you on one issue and be supportive on another.
- **Don't be vague or deceptive, righteous or long-winded, and please don't remind the legislator that you are a taxpayer and voter in his/her district.** (He/she knows it!)
- **Don't be an extremist.** Remember, your legislator represents all his/her constituents—those you consider liberal and those you consider conservative. Don't condemn a legislator just because he/she supports a piece of legislation that you think is too liberal or too conservative.
- **Don't be a busybody.** Legislators don't like to be pestered, scolded or preached to. Neither do you.
- **Be cooperative.** If your legislator makes a reasonable request, try to comply with it. You can help him/her by giving him/her the information he/she needs. Don't back away for fear you are "getting into politics."

### Letter Writing

Following are guidelines for an effective letter:

- Be brief.
- Make sure the legislator knows this communication is from a constituent who lives and/or does business in the legislator's district.
- Explain how the proposed legislation affects your business, and why you support/oppose it.
- Don't attempt to give "expert" opinions. Tell how the legislation would affect your business, based on your experience and knowledge.
- Refer to bill numbers whenever possible.
- Ask for the legislator's support or opposition.
- Write the letter without copying any association-provided background information verbatim.
- Request that your legislator take a specific action by telling him/her what you desire. State the facts as you see them. Avoid emotional arguments. If you use dollar figures, be realistic.
- Ask the legislator what his/her position is.
- Keep all communications friendly and respectful. Be sure to thank your legislator for considering your views.
- Write on your personal or business letterhead if possible, and sign your name over your typed signature at the end of your message.
- Be sure your exact return address is on the letter, not just the envelope. Envelopes sometimes get thrown away before the letter is answered.
- Be reasonable. Don't ask for the impossible. Don't threaten. Don't say, "I'll never vote for you unless you do such and such." That will not help your cause; it may even harm it.
- Be constructive. If a bill deals with a problem you admit exists, but you believe the bill is the wrong approach, tell what the right approach is.



- Send your association a copy of your letter and a copy of the response you receive from your legislator.
- Address all letters in the following manner, unless you are on a first name basis:

#### State Legislature:

- Assembly Member  
The Honorable Joe/Jo Doe  
California State Assembly  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
Dear Assemblyman/Assemblywoman Doe:
- Senator  
The Honorable Joe/Jo Doe  
California State Senate  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
Dear Senator Doe:

#### Local Elected Officials:

- Council Member  
The Honorable Joe/Jo Doe  
Councilman/woman,  
City of—  
City Hall  
City, State and Zip Code  
Dear Mr./Ms./Mrs./Miss Doe:
- County Supervisor  
The Honorable Joe/Jo Doe  
Supervisor, —County  
County Seat  
City, State and Zip Code  
Dear Sir/Madam:  
or Dear Mr./Ms./Mrs./Miss Doe:

#### Guidelines for District Visits

The following guidelines may be helpful when you make district visits:

- Members of the state Legislature rely heavily on their staffs for a major portion of their responsibilities, i.e., scheduling, advice on specific

legislation, constituent problems, etc. This is why it is important to maintain some familiarity with the district office staff. However, you do want to become acquainted and develop a working relationship directly with the legislators in your district.

- Generally, the legislative schedule permits each legislator to visit the district office on Fridays and holidays.
- Always call in advance for an appointment and briefly explain the purpose of the meeting. As a business person, you are an important constituent and the politician and his aides are eager to get acquainted.
- If the meeting with the senator or Assembly member is for the purpose of discussing specific legislation, review the background information and position statements available from your association and use the bill numbers when possible.
- Ask the legislator for his/her position on issues and how he/she will vote.

We encourage you to consider other activities as ways of effectively maintaining liaison with your district legislators:

- Invite other members of your profession to join you and your legislator for lunch.
- Invite your legislator to visit your company before opening. You may want to have a short meeting between your employees and the legislator. The legislator could make brief remarks, followed by a question-and-answer period.
- Offer to help organize an information business advisory group to meet regularly with your legislators to discuss business and key industry issues.

#### Telephone Procedures

- When the Legislature is in session, call the Capitol office; during recess and on Fridays, call the district office.
- Ask to speak directly to the legislator. If he/she is not available, ask to speak to the administrative assistant or legislative aide.
- When the legislator or his/her assistant is on the line, identify yourself and mention the name of your company and the fact that you are from the legislator's district.
- State the reason for the call. Use bill numbers whenever possible.
- Explain how the proposed legislation affects your business and why you support or oppose it.
- Discuss only one issue per telephone call.
- Ask the legislator's position.
  - ✓ If the legislator's position is the same as yours, express agreement and thanks.
  - ✓ If your position differs from the legislator's, politely express disappointment and offer some factual information supporting your views.
- Don't attempt to give "expert" opinions. Tell how legislation would affect your business, based on your experience and knowledge.
- Request that your legislator take a specific action by telling him/her what you desire. State the facts as you see them. Avoid emotional arguments. If you use dollar figures, be realistic.
- Keep all communication friendly and respectful.
- Thank the legislator or aide for his/her time and for considering your views.



# How to Write an Effective Lobbying Letter

Address lobbying correspondence to the author of the bill with copies to members of the committee hearing the bill and to your local legislator.

Indicate immediately which bill you're addressing by its bill number (AB\_\_ if it originates in the Assembly, SB\_\_ if it originates in the Senate), by an identifying phrase and whether you support or oppose the bill. This will help legislative staff in routing your letter.

Be sure to make clear for whom you're speaking.

Be sure to be clear about what action you want the legislator to take.

If you have a personal relationship with the legislator, take a moment to write a quick, handwritten note to draw his or her attention to your letter.

Be sure to send a copy of your letter to the Governor. Also please send a copy to the CalChamber staff members assigned to the bill so they can include information on your support or opposition in their committee testimony.

Use your business letterhead when communicating your position on a bill.

May 16, 2018

The Honorable Jim Patterson  
California State Assembly  
State Capitol, Room 4102  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**SUBJECT: AB 762 (PATTERSON) – RENEWABLE ENERGY RESOURCES: HYDROELECTRIC GENERATION SET FOR HEARING – APRIL 8, 2013 SUPPORT – JOB CREATOR**


Dear Assembly Member Patterson:

The California Asian Pacific Chamber of Commerce (CalAsian Chamber) is pleased to **SUPPORT** your **AB 762**, that will encourage job growth by reducing burdensome energy costs on California's businesses.

Electricity rates in California are among the highest in the nation, making it difficult for businesses to operate cost-effectively. California's RPS mandate is the most aggressive in the nation and will likely increase electricity rates even higher. **AB 762** will improve the ability of California electricity providers to cost-effectively meet their 33% RPS by allowing hydroelectric facilities of any size to count toward a utility's RPS.

For these reasons and others, we are pleased to **SUPPORT** your **AB 762**.

Sincerely,



Julian Canete  
President/CEO

cc: District Office, Assembly Member Patterson  
Central California Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

PFK:jc



Keep your letter short. A succinct, one-page letter will have more impact than a longer one. If you have documentation of the bill's impact on your business, enclose it, but keep the letter short.

In many committees, staff members file correspondence according to the date of the bill's next hearing. If you know the date, be sure to include it. Including such information will help ensure your letter is read in time to have an impact.

Get to the point of your letter quickly: your support for or opposition to the bill.

Provide concrete, credible information on the impact of proposed legislation on your business.

Elected officials prefer to hear from persons in authority rather than just from staff members. A letter will have more impact if the business owner or person in a management position signs the letter.

Use boldface type, underlining or italics sparingly to emphasize important points.

Act promptly. Too many good lobbying letters arrive after a vote already has been taken.

Later... If the legislator does what you ask, be sure to send a thank you letter.

# Guide to Reading a Bill



CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2013–14 REGULAR SESSION

**ASSEMBLY BILL** **No. 762**

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**Introduced by Assembly Member Patterson**

February 21, 2013

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An act to amend Section 399.12 of, and to repeal Section 399.12.5 of, the Public Utility Code, relating to energy.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL’S DIGEST

AB 762, as introduced, Patterson. Renewable energy resources: hydroelectric generation.

Existing law establishes the California Renewables Portfolio Standard Program, which requires the Public Utilities Commission to implement annual procurement targets for the procurement of eligible renewable energy resources, as defined, for all retail sellers, as defined, to achieve the targets and goals of the program. The existing definition of an eligible renewable energy resource includes small hydroelectric generation facilities of 30 megawatts or less that meet specified criteria.

This bill would revise the definition of an eligible renewable energy resource for the purposes of the California Renewables Portfolio Standard Program to include a hydroelectric generation facility of any size if it meets certain requirements. The bill would also make conforming changes.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes. State-mandated local program: no.

*The people of the State of California do enact as follows:*

1 SECTION 1. Section 399.12 of the Public Utilities Code is  
2 amended to read:

99

Indicates house of origin.

Date introduced.

Legislative Counsel drafts all legislation and writes a summary.

Date noted each time bill is amended.

Bills are introduced in sequential number in each house.

Code section being added or amended.

Strikethrough text indicates language that is being deleted; italics highlight language that is being added by an amendment.

The actual language that will be a part of the state code when the bill is enacted into law appears following the line: "The people of the State of California do enact as follows."



## The Legislative Process

- **Senate:** 40 members
- **Assembly:** 80 members
- **Regular Session:** Convenes on the first Monday in December of each even-numbered year and continues until November 30 of the next even-numbered year.
- **Special Session:** May be called by the Governor and is limited to a specific subject. Length is not limited and may be held concurrently with the regular session.
- **Effective Date of Laws:** January 1 of the year after enactment.

### Procedure

- **Introduction:** The bill is introduced by a member of the Senate or Assembly, read for the first time, then assigned to a committee by either the Senate Rules Committee or the Assembly Speaker.
- **Committee:** Hearing(s) are held in committee and testimony is taken from proponents and opponents. Generally, the committee will then amend, pass or fail to pass the bill.
- **Second Reading:** Bills that are passed by committee are read a second time and sent to the full floor for debate.
- **Floor Debate (in house of origin):** The bill is read a third time, debated and voted on. Most bills need a majority to pass (21 for the Senate, 41 for the Assembly). Bills with urgency clauses, appropriation measures and some tax-related bills need a two-thirds majority (27 for the Senate, 54 for the Assembly). If the bill is passed, it is sent to the second house.
- **Second House:** Procedures for a bill to pass the second house are similar to consideration and passage in the house of origin.
- **Amendments:** If the second house passes a bill with amendments, then the bill must be passed a second time by the house of origin for concurrence. If the amendments are rejected, a conference committee is formed to iron out the differences between the two houses.
- **Governor:** The Governor must act on (sign or veto) any bill that passes the Legislature within 12 days during the legislative session. However, the Governor has 30 days in which to act at the end of each year of the legislative session. Bills not acted on by the Governor automatically become law. A two-thirds vote of the Legislature is required to override a Governor's veto.