How to Communicate with Your Legislators

- Always identify yourself as a constituent, when appropriate.
- Keep your messages simple and personal.
- Give clear and thoughtful reasons to back up your views. Everyone has an opinion, but a good story combined with strong facts will boost your credibility.
- Establish a common connection with your legislator, if possible.
- Once you know a legislator supports your position, say thanks and move on to other issues.
- Be polite to everyone you contact. Threats are not effective.

**Letters and Emails**
Legislators receive hundreds of letters and e-mails every day. A personal letter is more likely to draw a response than e-mail, but both are valid ways to contact your legislator. *If you receive an Action Alert and contact your legislators as a result, your correspondence is more likely to be read and to have an effect if you include your personal story.*

- Keep written communication short and to the point.
- The subject line should reflect your main point and should be personalized.
- Identify yourself as a constituent.
- Describe your relationship with the University of Pittsburgh.
- Clearly state what action you want your legislator to take.
- Express your appreciation for their service.
- Sign your letter with your full name, address, and if you wish, phone number; use your personal or business letterhead, not University letterhead.

  **Please address your legislators and other elected officials in the following manner:**

  Your Name  
  Address  
  City, State, Zip Code  

  [InsertDate]  

  The Honorable [insert full name]  
  Address  
  City, State, Zip Code  

  Dear Representative [OR Senator] [insert last name]:

**Phone Calls**
Calling your legislators at their office is a great way to show you are interested and informed about an issue. It also lets legislators know that their actions are being followed.

- Before you call, plan the key points you want to make.
- If you do not connect with your legislator when you call, be sure to leave a short message.
- Always identify yourself as a constituent.
- Always say thanks.

**Personal Visit**
Personal visits, whether at a district office or in Harrisburg, can be one of the most effective methods of communicating with a legislator.

- Call the office to make an appointment before your visit. Let them know specifically what you wish to speak to them about, and offer them two or three alternative times you are available.
- Address legislators as “Representative” or “Senator”.
- Be prompt, prepared and positive when you meet. Have something in writing to leave behind with the legislator, preferably a one-page fact sheet on your issue and position.
- Always end by thanking legislators for their time and express interest in keeping in touch, even if they disagree with your position this time.