



GA Pet Coalition

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CITIZEN LOBBYING TIPS

Tips for Calling Your Elected Officials

1. **Watch for GPC 's email Action Alerts regarding a bill's status during the legislative session (Jan-Mar).** Legislators want to hear from their constituents and prefer phone calls. Ask your friends and family in your lawmaker's district to call as well. Note: Lawmakers do NOT want to hear from advocates outside of their districts, and they definitely do NOT want to hear from advocates in other states. Sign up to receive Action Alerts at www.gapetcoalition.org.
2. **Find out who your state or federal legislators are at** <https://pluralpolicy.com/open/> (Scroll down page to *Find Your Legislators*.)
3. **When calling, identify yourself as a constituent (name and city). Provide the bill number and ask the legislator to support or oppose.** Keep your tone respectful and polite, ALWAYS. Use the consensus message and talking points provided by GPC's Action Alert.
4. **If appropriate, tell your own story (optional).** Communicate how an issue affects you, your family, and your community.
5. **Note that sometimes NO ACTION is the best action that you can take!** This may seem counterintuitive, but sometimes animal related bills need to fly under the radar to reduce opposition.
6. **Remember that your State Senator and State Representative must review and debate hundreds of bills in a 3-month session.** If they do not seem as enthusiastic about a bill that you care about, try to understand that they may be overwhelmed with legislation on dozens of topics. Your role is to make their job easier by summarizing the animal related bill and why it matters to you.
7. **Avoid party politics.** Animals have friends on both sides of the aisle.
8. **Express gratitude.** Thank the staffer or official for their time. Call back and express polite disappointment if the lawmaker votes otherwise. Remember, they may vote your way next time.

Tips for Meeting with Your Elected Officials

1. **Develop a working relationship with elected officials by visiting their offices once or twice per year.** Know each lawmaker's background beforehand (e.g., occupation, committees served, community affiliations, and voting record). Bring several other concerned citizens with the same message to the meeting. This is also a great time to express your general concern as a humane voter.
2. **Look for opportunities to attend Town Hall Meetings, Meet n Greets, and Listening Tours.** Officials are especially receptive to citizen input prior to an election.
3. **Cultivate a positive working relationship with legislative staff.** They are usually more accessible and can relay your comments to the lawmaker.
4. **Tell lawmakers about your volunteer work in their district.** It shows your willingness to be part of the solution.
5. **Discuss 2-3 animal related issues. Utilize fact sheets from animal protection groups, including GPC.** You don't have to be a subject matter expert or provide solutions, but the more facts you have on your side, the better. Priority discussion items for 2024 include pet overpopulation, lack of access to low-cost spay/neuter, and prohibiting the outdoor sales of pets in transient locations such as parking lots and roadsides. The link between animal abuse and crimes against people should always be mentioned. Contact GPC for fact sheets.
6. **Personalize your request.** Use personal examples and tell how the problem affects you, your family and your community.
7. **Maintain a positive working relationship with all legislators.** They may hold their office (or higher) for decades and have the ability to influence other officials. Keep your tone respectful and polite. Hostile or sarcastic remarks are not productive.
8. **Avoid party politics.** Animals have friends on both sides of the aisle.
9. **Be flexible.** Sometimes compromise is a must. Support legislative strategies that may save an otherwise doomed bill if the compromise is worth the reward. Examples include the adoption of sunset provisions, grandfathering clauses, right-to-correct provisions, and grace periods.
10. **Do not burn your bridges!** The same lawmaker that may not agree with you on one issue, may be very helpful on other animal issues.
11. **Express gratitude.** As a follow up to your meeting, send a handwritten thank you note even if the outcome was not what you expected.