



# Shy Person's Guide to Calling Representatives

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF ALAMEDA · THURSDAY, JANUARY 26, 2017 14 Reads

Following are good step-by-step instructions by the Action Friday blog on Tumblr.

"In the coming weeks and years you will be seeing a lot of requests to call your representatives about issues facing our country. But maybe, like me, you hate calling people SO MUCH. This is a guide for you.

I'm anxious on the phone. My blood pressure rises when I need to call a customer service line, or even just ask the hours at a restaurant. So calling representatives about political issues is one of my least favorite things to do. I posted on Facebook recently about my experience calling my reps and it got a good response. I think there are a lot of us who want to pitch in but hesitate to pick up the phone. With that in mind, here is my shy person's guide to calling your representative."

**"BEFORE YOU START:**

- Pick an issue.
- Know that it's FAST. It takes maybe 2 minutes to call one person, including the time it take to look up their phone number. Think of it like ripping off a bandaid.
- Know that you don't have to be persuasive. You are really just calling to put yourself on a tally that will be passed along to your representative. You don't have to convince anyone and no one will try to argue with you. Just say your piece (as awkwardly as you want! they won't care!) and get off the phone.

- Know that calling is better than emailing. I would much prefer to email, but your message is more likely to get lost in the deluge. When you talk to a staffer you know for sure that your opinion is being recorded.
- Find your reps' numbers. Go here <http://www.house.gov/representative...> or here <http://www.whoismyrepresentative.com/...> [for your representative's contact info] to find out who they are. Call their local lines when possible. Write down the numbers or save them as contacts so you don't have to look them up every time.
- Take a deep breath.

#### DURING THE CALL:

- Start with an introduction. I use: Hi my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm a constituent of Rep./Sen. \_\_\_\_\_ calling about a concern I have. I see many scripts that omit how to start the call, and it helps me to know for sure how to begin. Be sure to say you are a constituent. They might ask for your zip code, so have that ready.
- Have a script. This is 100% the best way to keep you focused and calm. There are lots of good scripts you can use here or you can write your own. Say what you are comfortable saying. Remember, you are just calling to be counted.
- Expect their response. The thing I see missing from most instructions for calling reps is what to expect in their response. Most of the time they will just tell you they will pass on your concern. Congrats - if they do this then you are done! They might read a prepared statement in response. They might even say that your rep is not going to take action on the issue you brought up. What they WON'T do is argue with you or say, "what a stupid thing to be concerned about." Don't let your anxious brain convince you they will do this.
- If necessary, reiterate your request. If they read a statement or say the representative will not take action, don't get flustered. Just say, Once again, I'm calling on the Rep./Sen. to \_\_\_\_\_.
- Thank the staffer and hang up.

#### AFTER THE CALL:

- Take another deep breath.
- Congratulate yourself.
- Do some self-care. Maybe start here. Or here. Do whatever makes you feel happy and rewarded.
- Know that it gets easier. The more you call, the more you know what to expect. You may even get to know some staffers. You might never like calling but I promise it gets less awful."