

## **MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD:**

Communicating with your Legislators  
AAUW Nebraska Public Policy 2018



### **Nebraska Legislature Website**

Find information about legislators, bills, Nebraska law, the legislative process and more at [www.nebraskalegislature.gov](http://www.nebraskalegislature.gov).

### **Connecting with State Senators**

The most effective member-lobbyists are those who have developed a personal relationship with their state senators. Keep in touch with them throughout the session via emails, letters, phone calls, or personal visits.

#### **Email**

If you do not know the email address of your senator, it can be found at the link: [nebraskalegislature.gov/senators](http://nebraskalegislature.gov/senators).

Emails can be a useful tool to reach your state senator. Remember that emails should be treated as seriously as letters, so avoid informal language and symbols like emoticons.

Make sure that the text of your e-mail includes your contact information including your full name and address (including zip code). Some legislative offices may screen e-mails to ensure that they are coming from constituents. E-mails that appear to come from outside the district are unlikely to be read and may even be blocked.

#### **Letters**

Personal letters are always appreciated by senators. They are best used when there is not a short time frame for action on legislation.

Remember to be polite and always carefully proofread your letter. It is best to focus only on one or two issues at a time. Letters are effective especially if you can provide a real-life or personal example.

Send your letter to:

Senator (fill in first and last name)

District Number

State Capitol

P.O. Box 94604

Lincoln, NE 68509-4604

## Phone Calls

When time for action is short, you can call to leave a message for your legislator asking for their vote for or against a specific bill.

Find the phone number of your senator at: [nebraskalegislature.gov/senators](http://nebraskalegislature.gov/senators).

## Meeting With a Senator (Preparation)

If you are able to meet with your senator, here are useful tips to help in preparation:

- Know the bill number or amendment number that you hope to discuss.
- Be knowledgeable. Don't assume the legislator knows the issue, so begin thinking through the basic facts and information that you may want to share.
- Prepare to make a specific request when talking about a bill or an appropriation, being concise and clear about what is needed. Often this includes a request for a "yes" or "no" vote.
- Think of personal examples, if possible, regarding the impact of the legislation.
- Be prepared to answer questions.

## Meeting With a Senator

- Introduce yourself and tell where you live—senators like to have the contact information of those they talk with and like to know if you are a constituent.
- Tell the senator that you are a member of AAUW Nebraska, a nonpartisan, non-profit organization that works on behalf of women and girls through advocacy, education, philanthropy, and research.
- In a small group for a face-to-face, it is helpful to select one or two spokespersons for the group and perhaps a note-taker.
- Be concise, fair, respectful, and assertive in making your points about support or opposition for a bill without being argumentative or rude.
- Listen carefully to understand the view of the senator. Avoid interrupting.
- When asking a senator to explain the rationale for their position, it's often effective to say something like "Help me understand..." or "Tell me more about your thinking/reasoning..." rather than asking "Why?" which can sometimes put a person on the defensive.
- Avoid personal attacks or insults.
- If tempers flare, try to calmly refocus on the topic at hand or end the conversation on a civil tone.
- Confirm any follow-up plans such as emailing information regarding the issue.
- Thank the senator for their time in speaking with you.