

# Spin Control

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## Legislative Tips

It's a good time to talk about the best way to contact legislators now that the Maryland General Assembly and the United States Congress are back in session. Here are some tips for contacting your legislator.

### Keep your Legislator Informed

1. Send your legislators a copy of your unit newsletter.
2. Print a copy of the ***MDWG Weekly Digest*** and send it to your legislators.
3. Send an e-mail with a link to your unit's website to your legislators to introduce yourself.
4. Include your legislators on your e-mail list.

### Guidelines for Telephone Calls

1. Telephone calls should be for a single purpose not just to "chat." Know the purpose of your call. Take the time to list the points you wish to make on a sheet of paper before you call so you can check them off as you speak.
2. If you are speaking about a particular piece of legislation, know the bill number and title of the appropriate bill, its author, its general purpose and the rationale for your support or opposition.
3. Identify yourself at the beginning of the telephone call. State your name and address. Make sure you state that you are a Civil Air Patrol member .

4. Ask to speak to a legislative aide if you are calling about a bill and the legislator is not available. Make sure you ask for and write down the name of the aide with whom you speak.

5. Find out if the legislator has a position on the issue and if so what it is. If the legislator is undecided, find out if there is any information you (or CAP) can provide.

6. Don't argue, antagonize, or threaten. Be professional. You can be assertive and polite at the same time.

7. Thank the legislator or the legislative aide for his/her time.

8. Send a follow-up letter to the legislator reinforcing the substance of your call. In the letter, you may want to refer to the assistance you received from the legislative aide and express your appreciation.



## Guidelines for Letters

1. Address your legislator correctly:

### For Delegates

The Honorable (Full Name)  
Member of the House of Delegates  
Lowe House Office Building, Room XX  
84 College Ave.  
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

### For Senators

The Honorable (Full Name)  
Member of the Senate  
James Senate Office Building, Room XX  
110 College Ave.  
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

2. Use an inside address followed by the date.

3. Begin your letter with the correct salutation:

Dear (Delegate) (Senator) + (Last Name)

4. Handwritten letters are more personal, but if a legislator cannot read your handwriting the letter will not be effective. Have someone “proof” your handwriting. Then make a decision if you should handwrite or type your letter.

5. Identify yourself as a Civil Air Patrol member in the first paragraph of the letter. State your unit.

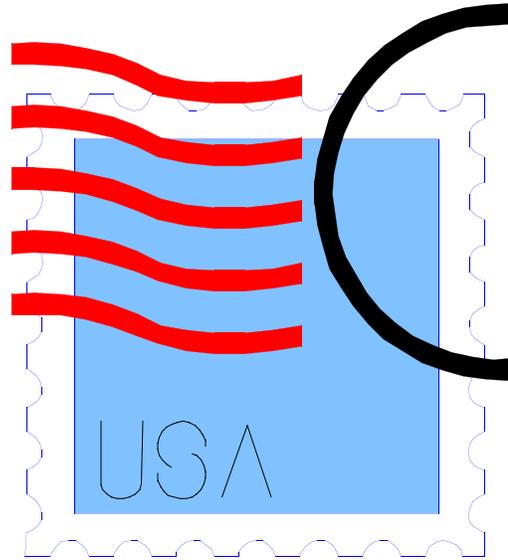
6. Keep the letter short. It will be more effective if you address a single issue or piece of legislation. If you are discussing a particular bill, make sure you refer to the bill by its number and short title. Know the bill’s author, its general purpose and the rationale for your support or opposition.

7. Make sure of correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Have someone proofread the letter for you. You want to make sure you present a professional image.

8. Whenever appropriate, include a question in your letter which will elicit an answer. Ask the legislator for his/her position on the issue or the legislation.

9. Postcards work well for mass mailings from members in your local unit. Consider preprinting one side of 4 x 6 index cards with the Legislator’s

name and address. At a meeting have members write their message on the cards. Postcard messages should be short and direct. You can collect all the postcards and put postage on them, send them together in one big envelope, or deliver them in person during a visit.



## Guidelines for Face-to-Face Meetings

1. Make an appointment with your legislator for a specific period of time. Usually 1/2 hour is sufficient. If you have an appointment with more than one legislator, leave plenty of time between appointments.

2. Be on time for your meeting, but don’t get upset if your legislator is not on time. Your legislator is seeing to the business of the state and may get “stuck” in a committee meeting or speaking to someone in the hall.

3. Be sure to introduce yourself. Wear a nametag with your name clearly printed. Don’t put your legislator in the awkward position of having to ask your name.

4. Get down to business quickly. Chat a little, but don’t waste a busy person’s time.

5. Be a representative of CAP. This is not an occasion to express personal opinions which may differ from CAP positions.

6. Make sure you send a “Thank You” note.