



# ADVOCACY TOOLBOX

## MAKING EFFECTIVE PHONE CALLS

When time is limited and a vote or congressional action is imminent, a personal phone call to members of Congress (MOCs) or key legislative staff is the most effective method to communicate your views.

You may not always get past the receptionist if your MOC is receiving a high volume of calls, but your call is still important and will be counted and shared with your MOC. If the issue is of high importance, consider organizing colleagues, family, friends and others in your network that may care or be affected by the issue to call in, as well.

### MAKING THE CALL

- Ask for the member of Congress (MOC) if you know them personally. If you have an existing relationship with their chief-of-staff or legislative director, you may also ask for them.
- If you don't personally know your MOC, ask to speak with the legislative assistant who handles agricultural issues.
- If you can't reach a legislative assistant, leave a concise message on their voicemail or with the receptionist.
- Focus on a single issue, making two or three key points.
- Have talking points - or your own notes - in front of you to stay focused.
- Localize the issue to demonstrate direct impact to their constituents.
- Clearly state the action you want your MOC to take on the issue.
- Keep your call brief. If speaking only with the receptionist, your call shouldn't take more than a minute or two. If speaking with a staffer, three or four minutes is adequate.
- Don't lie or fake an answer if you are asked a question you don't know. Admit you don't know, but tell them you will follow up.
- Leave your name and contact information and offer to be a resource if they have any questions in the future.
- If you spoke to a staffer, save his or her contact information and use it to build a relationship with their office.
- Say thank you!

