



**MUUSAN**

Maine Unitarian Universalist  
State Advocacy Network

## Tips on Citizen Activism: Letters and Legislators

### Writing Letters to the Editor (LTEs)

Editorial pages are one of the most-read sections of newspapers, often followed by legislators to understand issues of importance to constituents. Letters to the Editor (LTEs) can also educate and persuade editors to cover an issue more.

- \* Follow submission guidelines, including number of words allowed.
- \* Respond to and cite an article that's appeared in a recent paper, but don't re-state that point.
- \* Keep it short, focused and interesting... **remove every non-essential word.**
- \* Share your expertise/experience if available and appropriate to the topic.
- \* Try to be positive, giving credit where you can.
- \* Speak in your own words... your *voice*.
- \* Try to weave in our **Unitarian Universalist values** if possible.
- \* If your letter is published, clip and send a copy to your legislator.

Sources: *Union of Concerned Scientists* and *Reclaim Democracy* websites and our collective experiences

### Lobbying Your Maine Legislators

- \* Be familiar with how the legislature works and follow procedures and rules.
- \* Legislators prefer to hear from constituents rather than lobbyists.
- \* Understand that our legislators are volunteers and are often overwhelmed by too much information and too little time.
- \* Keep communication positive and fact-based.
- \* Share your expertise and personal experience if appropriate to the topic.
- \* The best email is well-timed and positive.
- \* *Phone calls are rare, so may be more effective.*
- \* Make friends with staff, as they are there for the "long haul."
- \* Be cognizant of where your issue stands in the legislator's priorities.
- \* Never get mad or burn a bridge with a legislator.
- \* **Thank them for their service.**

Sources: Senator Cathy Breen presentation and our collective experiences

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## **Conducting In-District Meetings with Legislators**

- \* Organize a group of UUs and allies from your area.
- \* Pick three dates and invite area legislators (early mornings are good).
- \* Decide three issues or bills that you want to discuss.
- \* Have one person take the lead on each issue.
- \* Describe how the bill will affect people in their district.
- \* Try and weave Unitarian Universalist values into the discussion if possible.

Source: Dale McCormick, former Senator

## **Speaking Before Legislative Committees**

- \* Prepare written remarks and have 20 copies to share with committee members.
- \* Introduce yourself and say where you live.
- \* State why you support or oppose a bill as succinctly as possible.
- \* Substantiate your position with factual information and personal experience, if available and appropriate.
- \* Share your passion around the issue in a non-confrontational manner.
- \* Don't read your testimony. Speak from your heart.

Source: our collective experience