

Phone Calls

In every legislative effort there comes a time when it is crucial to have immediate contact from the grassroots. Often there is less than twenty-four hours before a key vote. A process for telephoning members and urging personal phone calls to legislators before a key vote is essential. Several calls to a legislator's office just before a vote can be persuasive, especially if the legislator has not taken a definite stand on the issue. Members should be provided with a legislative roster. Rosters can be located via the LACMA's website (www.lacmanet.org) under Government Affairs.

If it is impossible to speak directly with the legislator, ask to speak with his or her legislative aide or leave a detailed message. Legislative offices keep count of pro and con phone calls on particular issues. An example call script follows:

Legislative Call Script

Opening

"Hello. My name is Dr. <name>, a constituent from <location> calling Assembly Member/Senator <name> on behalf of the Los Angeles County Medical Association. I would like to talk with the Assembly Member/Senator for a few minutes about SB 592 (Aanestad)."

If Legislator is Available

"Thank you for taking a few minutes to speak with me."

"I am calling to urge your support of SB 592, which would significantly reduce the cost associated with medication related errors and greatly improves upon quality of care processes whereby chronically ill patients receive treatment by establishing a completely voluntary program within the hospital environment by allowing appropriately physicians to check the work of the practice of medicine technicians. Physicians believe this bill will actually increase the quality of care patients will receive."

"California is currently experiencing a shortage of physicians and utilizing the practice of medicine technicians to the full extent of their registration, education and subsequent training will allow hospital-based physicians to provide more clinically based and cost effective co-management care with physicians, nurses and other health care providers."

"Can we count on your support for SB 592?"

If Legislator is Non-Committal

"Can we provide additional information that may help in your decision regarding this issue?"

If Legislator Asks Questions

If you cannot respond accurately, do not fudge. Tell the legislator: *"I'll have to check on that but I will get you the information you need."*

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Legislative Call Script (continued)

If Legislator Not Available When You Call

"Is the health staff member or the staff member assigned to this issue available?"

If Staff Member is Available

"Thank you for taking a few minutes to speak with me. As an active member of CPA and a psychologist practicing in the Assembly Member/Senator's district, I urge support for AB 348. As you may know, this bill... (same as above as if a legislator is available) Can we count on the Assembly Member's/Senator's support for AB 348?"

If Nobody Available

"I would appreciate it if you would tell Assemblymember/Senator <name> that I called to urge support for SB 592, and that I intend to follow its progress closely. Thanks for taking my call."

A Checklist for Telephone Calls

- _____ Identify yourself by name and profession, and as a constituent if you live or practice in the district.
- _____ Identify the bill by its number and author.
- _____ Ask for the legislator's view, remembering that diplomacy and tact will keep the door open for further contact.
- _____ Briefly state your position and how you would like the legislator to vote.
- _____ Tell the legislator how many people you have in your group who concur with your opinion. Be ready to back the number up with a list of names. Offer to provide it.
- _____ If you talk with staff, request that your message be relayed to the legislator.
- _____ Phone calls may be most effective in the last few days before a vote.