

Making EE Heard in Wisconsin

Communicating with Elected State Officials

Adapted from information provided by Kathe Crowley Conn of Nature Net: the Environmental Learning Network

Even when it's not a budget or election year, WAEE must remain visible to legislators on state and local levels. The state of the economy and local quality of life directly affect the environmental education efforts in Wisconsin cities, towns and rural areas.

DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE MESSAGES

If you can come up with brief answers to these five questions, you are well on your way to coming up with a message that is short, clear, and convincing.

Who are you?

- Name
- Do you live in the legislator's district?
- Plug your membership and number of members in WAEE.

What is your issue? What do you care about?

- Pick one issue.
- Be prepared to describe your issue and don't be surprised if your legislator is unfamiliar with it
- Describe your issue briefly and plainly (no more than 2-3 sentences—don't bury people with details. You can leave behind additional written materials.

Why do you care?

- Why does this matter to you? To your family? To your community?
- Why does it matter enough for you to take the time to write, call or visit?
- How will it change your life or the lives of people you know?
- Tell a personal story, a story from your heart—no one has ever been moved by statistics alone.

Why should they care?

- Why should your listener care?
- What's happening in their community?

What do you specifically want them to do about it?

- Always have something specific in mind that you want them to do.
- If there's a bill, ask them to vote "yes" or "no." If it isn't a bill (or you're not sure), be sure to tell them what you would want them to do with the issue. (e.g. take leadership and work for changes, make sure that current law doesn't get changed, etc.)
- Sometimes, the best action you can hope for is keeping the dialogue open—ask if they would be willing to read some informational materials and then get a follow-up phone call from you.