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eveloping 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.

1. WHO ARE YOU?

- Name.
 - Do you live in the legislator's district?
 - Are you a member of an organization (e.g. school club, religious group, community association)
 - How many are in your group?
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2. WHAT IS YOUR ISSUE?

What do you care about? What makes you the most angry?

- Pick one issue.
 - Be prepared to describe your issue and don't be surprised if your legislator is unfamiliar with it—legislators have their policy plates full of everything from deer to roads to child care to prisons.
 - Be prepared to 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.
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3. WHY DO YOU CARE?

- Why does this matter to you? To your school? To your friends? Family? 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.
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4. WHY SHOULD THEY CARE?

- Why should your listener care?
 - What's happening in their community? Schools?
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5. 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.
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