

**Hey Mr Representative, I want.....?**

While down in Washington, DC for the Rolling Thunder Convention [www.rollingthunder1.com](http://www.rollingthunder1.com) this past month, I attended some very interesting seminars. One in particular was on the "do's and don'ts" of calling/writing your government officials. Since everybody has either thought about it or actually written for any given reason, I figured this subject is good to go anytime. Plus you know me and politics!

We had the honor of hearing two Congressional aides give their thoughts on this. Ryan from Congressman Boozman's office (3rd District Arkansas) and Ethan from Congressman Taylor's office (4th district Mississippi).

The first thing I would recommend is that you find out what kind of office your representative has. Is it an informal, everybody who has a free hand answers the phone and tries to answer to the best of their ability, or is it, I will get the person in charge of that issue for you. Knowing the right contact for your particular thoughts is always a good start.

Ethan was first up with some suggestions as to what his office likes to see.

\*Staffers and legislators take much more notice when letters are hand written, they're more personal in nature. Generic letters are less likely to be looked at, and petition type letters are a low priority because the staff just doesn't have time to look up each address, provided there are address's. If it's a petition with no address's, save the postage because more than likely it will be filed in the trash. Lastly are the e-mail's: This route is one step above trash but much lower than personally written. You make the call.

\*Tone of letter (be polite) A long line a cursing 4-letter words will not get you very far. How far would it get you with your boss?

\*When people call about bills they (support, oppose or just vent). When Calling know what your looking for (history of topic etc). Don't be afraid to inform the person about issue. Many times an issue or thought that you have has never entered the staffers mind. They have hundreds of issues to deal with. Let's all help them, to help us.

\*Etiquette-Be polite when asking. Also ask to talk to person that can give answer to your specific question (not just anyone) Interns may not be able to talk to you, because she/he doesn't know.

Many offices have individuals for individual topics-veteran, social etc

\*Don't beat up staff if they don't know the answer to your question. (It may make you feel better, but you didn't get anywhere.)

\*High volume of calls and letters does attract the attention of staff/representative. This should be obvious, but it take many to get things done. A few great motivated people is nice but the load is less on them when more get involved.

Next up was Ryan: He added a couple of other interesting thoughts. He said that, "You are the experts on the issues that matter to you when contacting a Senator or Congressman's office."

Most of what was mentioned by Ryan can be applied to the following question.

What if my Representatives don't think the way I do and the media is not much more of a help?

\*Secure media= Make contact at tv, radio, newsprint etc. Sit down with the editor of your local paper and explain what you are looking for, and what you need from them. Have specific thoughts when talking to them, keep it simple and easy.

\* Follow up with a request (Can I give you a call next week to see what you came up with?)

This let's them know you will be checking back and they don't want to look bad.

\* Get reporter on your side. It's always good to have someone friendly to your side that you can go to. This gives you an in when you want to get your message out.

\*Be an advocate for you cause

\*Develop relationship with D.C. and Local Reps and Senators. Attend listening sessions, town meetings etc. Trust me your on this. They will not forget you easily if you make an impression in their minds.

So there you have it. A quick and hopefully informative overview of how to deal with elected officials. We all have issues that we want to see move forward. Motorcyclists are always having to fight for what we believe. Veterans have many fronts to their agenda like benefits and other issues like POW-MIA that we as a nation need to keep in the for front. Each one of us has the power to make changes in our own little worlds. Hopefully all of you will not sit back and let others do your bidding.

To find your Wisconsin Legislator- [waml.legis.state.wi.us](http://waml.legis.state.wi.us)

To find Minnesota Legislator- [www.leg.state.mn.us](http://www.leg.state.mn.us)

To find Illinois Legislator- [www.ilprincipals.org/pages/contact\\_your\\_legislator.html](http://www.ilprincipals.org/pages/contact_your_legislator.html)

To find Iowa Legislator- [www.legis.state.ia.us](http://www.legis.state.ia.us)

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