

Communicating With Your State Legislators

DO schedule an appointment in advance.

DO talk with legislators at times most convenient for them. Their office assistants can tell you when they are available. **Keep your visit brief** — no more than 15 minutes, unless the legislator would like to have a longer meeting.

DO provide them stories, anecdotes, testimonials and brief examples of how University of Missouri Extension is adding to the local economy and improving the lives of people in their district. Invite the legislator to visit a program, club, event or conference when they are in your home area, where they can see firsthand the impact MU Extension is having on people.

DO involve legislators in program activities — workshops, 4-H competitions, planning and advisory committees, county fairs, field days, open houses, dinners, showcases — any event that helps them understand the MU Extension mission and impact on the citizens of Missouri, particularly the citizens of their district.

DO research your legislator's background — voting record on educational issues and past/current connections with MU Extension. Who are the people in your community that influence the legislator's opinions and decisions? (Legislators' background info is available at <http://www.mo.gov/Government/Legislative>.)

DO develop ongoing, personal relationships with legislators. Invite them to join you for a soda and/or coffee or to visit your local extension center. Drop by their local offices to introduce yourself and acquaint them with MU Extension programs and resources.

DO show your appreciation to legislators when they do something favorable for MU Extension. If, for example, you see a newspaper article quoting them saying something positive about MU Extension, or if you hear them making favorable public remarks, drop a note: "I appreciated your remarks about education and the role of University of Missouri Extension (4-H, agriculture, business, community development, nutrition programs) at the Rotary meeting Friday." Keep notes short.

DO become an accurate source of information to your legislators, and offer services of MU Extension whenever feasible.

DON'T deluge legislators with written materials. Most will read one page maximum; their secretaries and assistants dispose of most things postmarked outside their districts.

DO leave a testimonial letter from yourself or another program participant telling firsthand what MU Extension has done in your life or in your community.

DO follow up contacts with your legislators with personal, hand-written notes, thanking them for their time and feedback.

In summary, legislators represent and are responsive to their constituents. Show them how their constituents are benefiting from University of Missouri Extension programs.