



Recess Is Over! 10 Tips for Effectively Communicating with Legislators

Welcome Back From Recess!

Welcome back from the Congressional Recess! We hope you all have been enjoying the summer while also keeping up with your members of Congress who have now returned to the Hill after spending August at home meeting with their constituents. Although the Recess is over, there are still effective ways to communicate with your Legislators using these useful tips.



The Top 10

The following 10 tips will help your message stand out among the hundreds that pour into a legislative office every day:

1. Establish Your Relevance

Be clear about how you are connected educationally to the district or state your legislator represents. Your affiliation with CEC is just as important as your connection to the population you will represent as a special educator. Always make sure legislators understand how the issues you're discussing impact the people they represent.

2. Be Specific

Legislative offices often receive vague, unspecific comments that do not provide them the important information in understanding your issue or how to help. Effective advocates will ask for something specific related to their position. This might include asking your legislator to cosponsor legislation or send a letter in support of increased funding. Letters to send to your members of Congress about key legislation can be found at [CEC's Legislative Action Center](#).



3. Prioritize Your Requests

If you ask for too many things without making your top priorities clear, the legislative office may not be able to identify how to spend limited staff resources to meet your requests. Let the office know what action needs the most immediate attention.

4. Share Briefing Materials

You will want to provide your legislators with some "briefing" materials related to what you're discussing. CEC offers [Issue Briefs](#) for this purpose. Be sure to include your contact information so your legislator can get back to you!

5. Be Polite

Whether you are writing, calling or meeting with your legislators, you should always be polite. If you are unable to provide information, don't panic! Be sure to find the information they request and follow-up.

6. Don't Put Negative Labels On Your Opponents

Refrain from negative labels and try to grant credibility to opposing views. Be sure to read through [CEC Issues Briefs](#), and [other resources](#) to make sure you are conveying proper the most up to date information.



7. Be Patient

Do not expect an immediate response to your recommendations. In many cases, the issue may be one that the member has not yet formed an opinion about or maybe had not been aware of. Therefore, it is perfectly appropriate to ask when you should follow-up.

8. Let the Office Know How You Can Help

If you have expertise related to specific special education or early intervention policy issues, let the legislator and his or her staff know. They are always looking for experts on complicated issues and you might be a tremendous resource for them. Become their trusted resource.

9. Keep Notes

Make sure to keep thorough notes of the meeting and/or call. Any information you can share with CEC will be valued and appreciated. If you receive a reply from a

letter, forward it on to us as well. Knowing what the legislators' views are helps CEC shape priorities regarding policy issues.



10. Follow-Up

Be sure to follow-up with your legislators! If you shared a specific policy issue with them, ask if they have had a chance to review briefing materials or have any questions you can further answer for them. And of course, thank them for taking the time to talk, meet or respond to you.