

# Calling Your Legislators



## **First:**

Think about why you're contacting your representative? Is it to philosophize on your vision of the world? Is it to pontificate on the role of government? Is it to hurl expletives? None of these will produce results, and legislators don't serve their public if they're not helping us. You must have a specific request.

## **The Role:**

There are different gatekeepers, depending on what you want. If there's a dangerous pothole outside your house, you call the city. If you want to protect internet privacy, that's the federal government. And civil rights are often acted upon by the Supreme Court. Between this gulf is the state government, which is where your state representatives and senators work.

## **The Difference:**

State laws do not have the same power as federal laws, but they're easier to influence and are more effective than city or municipal ordinance. It may be easy to pass an ordinance like a minimum wage, but what good is that ordinance if people live and work in different cities? Meanwhile, trying to raise the minimum wage in congress is impossible right now. For that reason, millions of people are petitioning their state legislators for a \$15 minimum wage in Massachusetts.

## **How:**

Bills become laws in Massachusetts very similar to the School House Rock version of congress. It's important for our state senators and representative to co-sponsor bills, to send them to committee, and eventually to vote on them with a veto-proof majority. And to become law, the Governor must sign it.

## **What?**

So what is that ask? Think not only about what's important to you but how it can translate into something tangible. Being angry about the way Donald Trump treats women is justified, but what can your state representative do about that? Well, she could pass a law that says that women should be paid when they take time off for having a child... that's an example of a tangible ask.

**My background.** What am I concerned about?

**First.** Who is my state rep, state senator, and what is their phone number?

Visit <http://wheredoivotema.com/> and enter your address.

**The role.** Does my state rep or senator seem to share my values? How can I appeal to them? Just a little research goes a long way.

**The difference.** Don't just tell them what you want them to do. Explain why.

**How.** Let's diagram an ask. A \$15 minimum wage is good philosophically, but how can we make it personal?

**What?** Put it all into practice. Create a small script that you'll use when you call them.

**Bonus!** Guess what, this script can be altered slightly to be an effective letter to the editor!