



Contacting your State Representative or State Senator

How to find your State Legislators

To find out what district you're in, who your elected officials are and how you can contact them, go to:

<http://www.elections.il.gov/DistrictLocator/SelectSearchType.aspx>

Write or call the Springfield Office (State Capitol) between now and June 2009.

Guidelines

Writing a letter or calling your representatives is an important way to tell them how the voters feel about certain issues. Constituent views are often factored into votes.

- Keep your comments brief. Try to limit your letter to one page and one issue, your call to one minute.
- Identify yourself and the issue. In the beginning of your letter or call, say who you are and what issue you are concerned about. If you are referring to a specific bill, identify it by number (e.g., HB 48). Reference your home address in your call or letter so the representative knows you are from their district.
- Focus on your key points. Choose the three strongest points that support your position and state them clearly and succinctly.

Know your facts. Inaccurate or misleading information will hurt your credibility. A *sampling of facts on gun violence in Illinois to reference can be found at www.icpgv.org/icpgv_facts.html*

- Make it personal. Tell your representative why the issue matters to you and how it affects you and your community. Make a connection to the representative – mention if you voted for him/her or if you contributed to his/her campaign.
- Tell your representative how you want him/her to vote and ask for a response. Be sure to include your name and address on both your letter and envelope

A Note About E-mail

In general, the same guidelines apply to e-mail as to written letters or calls. E-mail communications draw mixed reactions from public officials. Many representatives delete broadcast e-mails that clog their mailboxes. Others may not check their incoming messages themselves. Before sending an e-mail, call and ask the staff in

your elected official's office whether they use e-mail and whether a letter sent via e-mail would be effective and appreciated.

- E-mail your representative only. Do not copy other representatives or send a mass e-mail.
- Send a brief message, with no special layouts or graphics. Do not include attachments.
- Include your full name and address so it is clear that you are a constituent, and ask for a response. You might want to follow up with a hard copy of your e-mail.
- Follow the same guidelines in writing an e-mail message that you would for a hand-written or typed letter.

Sample Letter to State Legislators

(Month) (Day), 2009

The Honorable (First) (Last)
(Room Number), State Capitol
Springfield, IL 62706

RE: Gun Violence Prevention Policies

Dear (Representative/Senator) (Last),

As a constituent and (job title) with (employer/organization) in (city), Illinois, I am writing to express my fear of the levels of gun violence throughout Illinois and nationwide and to urge you to support several important common sense bills designed to prevent gun violence and death.

It is not safe to go shopping, get in your car, or attend a civic meeting as long these guns are on the streets. (Add a personal anecdote about the recent gun violence or how gun violence has affected you, your family, friends, or community.)

It is too easy for criminals to buy guns on the streets from straw purchasers or from rogue gun dealers. It frightens me to know that Illinois has the second highest concentration of crime gun dealers in the U.S. From 1999 to 2005 guns killed 8,018 Illinois residents. In cities across the country, homicides and aggravated assault with a firearm both increased by 10 percent from 2004 to 2006.

There may be no moral explanation for the senseless, brutal shootings in Illinois this past year - in Chicago, at Northern Illinois University, in Tinley Park, and elsewhere - but that doesn't mean we are powerless to prevent gun violence.

We need to ensure that everyone who buys a handgun is cleared by law enforcement, even if the gun is exchanged through a private transfer. Nationwide, 40 percent of gun transactions occur through unlicensed sellers and no-questions-asked private deals that require no background checks. This loophole allows criminals with felony or domestic violence convictions and persons with mental illness to purchase firearms without a background check. By law Illinois requires thorough background checks for firearm purchases at gun stores and at gun shows. Why shouldn't private purchasers be held to that same standard?

I hope that you will not underestimate the gravity of the issue at hand. We now have the opportunity to help prevent thousands more from being wounded or killed by guns in Illinois in years to come. Please support common sense gun polices.

Sincerely,

(First) (Last)

(Title)

Sample Phone Script For Calls to Legislators about Universal Background Checks

Hello, my name is (First, Last) and I am a constituent of Senator/Representative (Last).

I am calling today to express my concern about gun violence in Illinois and to urge Senator/Representative (Last) to support a proposed new law which can prevent further gun violence and death.

This is a common sense measure that I believe will reduce criminal's ability to purchase firearms on our streets.

End call with key messaging points:

- **Nationwide, 40% of gun transactions occur through unlicensed sellers and no-questions-asked private deals that require no background checks.**
- **Roughly 20% of gun trafficking investigations involve transfers by unlicensed sellers who are not required to conduct a background check.**
- **Eight in 10 Illinois voters strongly support requiring private background checks before the sale of guns to private individuals. 60% of all voters who are gun owners, NRA members, hunters, and FOID card holders also support this common sense requirement.**
- **Our lawmakers should join the majority of Illinois voters and support closing this loophole.**

(Thank the staff person and leave your name, title and phone number.)