



## ADVOCACY TOOLBOX

### Sending Effective Emails

When time is short to get an urgent message to your member of Congress (MOC), email is a great option. If you have an existing relationship with your MOC or a particular staff member, use the email address you have for them. If you are a new advocate or have not yet developed a connection with your MOC's office, contact your MOC through the webform on his or her official website.

#### **Identify Yourself as a Constituent**

Put your name and address at the top of your message if using an individual email address. Your address will be a required field if using your MOC's online webform, but a good way to start a message is, "As a constituent of [state or city/town]."

#### **Personalize Your Message**

A personal story is a powerful form of advocacy. Persuasive constituent messaging humanizes issues by placing them in a local, personal and relatable context. When sample emails are provided for your use, incorporate your own words and personal perspective into the text for maximum impact.

#### **Be Brief**

MOCs and legislative staff are extremely busy. Respect their time and try to tell them only what they need to know. Two or three paragraphs is sufficient. Do not feel that you have to make every single argument that relates to the issue, only the strongest points you can make.

#### **Be Clear About Your Position**

Your request should be stated as a concrete, actionable item, e.g. "I would like you vote yes on S. XX," or, "I want you to co-sponsor H.R. XX." Always be sure that your ask is crystal clear.

#### **Make Your Message Timely**

Send your message when the legislation is being considered in committee or by the full House or Senate. Your message isn't much help if it arrives after a critical vote. Look to TFI to keep you informed of important legislation by signing up to receive action alerts and updates.

**Be Civil**

You are allowed to disagree with your MOC, but you will not be an effective advocate if you use aggressive language in your message. Communications that border on abusive are seldom taken seriously by a congressional office.

**Establish Your Credibility**

You are an expert on fertilizer issues, so being up front about that fact gives greater weight to the arguments or requests in your email. Your MOC and staff need to know how their policies are going to affect the fertilizer industry and you have the unique ability to share that information with them.

**Don't Lie or Exaggerate**

Legislative staffers are adept at spotting tall tales. Any story that sounds too perfect or any statistic that is not substantiated will not bolster your position, but rather permanently damage your reputation and the effectiveness of your advocacy efforts.

**Proofread Your E-mail**

Spelling errors and poor grammar reflect poorly on your credibility and harm the effectiveness of your advocacy efforts. Take a break before you hit send and proof your message. And if possible, have another set of trusted eyes read over it to ensure it is clear and cohesive.