



Advocacy with Legislators

Why?

Talking with elected officials about issues important to you can make a difference!



Contacting your elected officials is an effective way to be heard and involved in our political process.

Meeting in person, calling, and writing emails or letters are ways to make sure your ideas are heard. Legislators keep track of what is important to the people they represent.



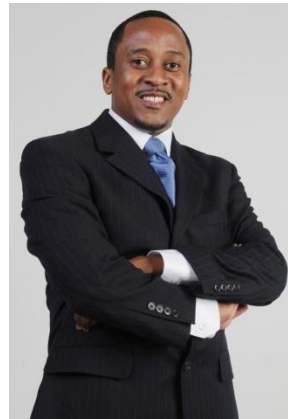
Know Who They Are

Find out who represents you in the state legislature. You have a member of the Michigan Senate and Michigan House of Representatives. To find their names and contact information go to: <http://www.house.mi.gov/mhrpublic/> for the House of Representatives <http://www.senate.michigan.gov/fysenator/fysenator.htm> for the Senate



Senator
Tonya Schuitmaker
District 20

www.misenategop.com/senators/contact.asp?District=20



Representative
Brian Banks
District 1

www.001.housedems.com

Before contacting your legislators it is helpful to learn about their interests and positions on proposed laws. Most legislators have web pages and many have an email list you can join.

Prepare Your Issues

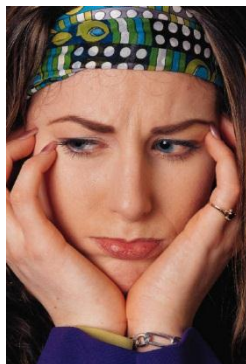
Do Your Homework

Plan what you want to share and how you will present it. With proposed bills that you support or oppose, find out as much as you can.



Tips:

1. If you are worried about funding cuts to a program, learn about the program and the planned cuts before you make contact.



2. If you plan to talk about a certain bill, identify it by the bill number.

SENATE BILL No. XXX

House Bill No. XXXX

3. Make sure you know what the bill proposes and how it will affect you and people you know.



4. If you are with a group, give tasks to group members to be fully prepared (calling, emailing, letters, research, note taking).



Making a Visit



1. Schedule the visit by phone or email

- Be clear about why you want to visit – ask for no more than 15-20 minutes. Tell how many people will be with you when you ask for the visit.
- Be patient – if you don't receive a return call or email right away, don't be discouraged. Wait a week or so and try again.



2. Getting Ready

- If you are part of a group, select a person to do the talking & bring no more than four members



- Practice what you want to say, be brief



- Leave time for questions



- Bring materials to share



3. Your Visit

- Be on time



- Be professional and polite



- Do not feel bad if you meet with a member of your legislator's staff. They often help decide what topics are brought to a busy legislator. In some cases, staff members may know more about your issues.
- Answer questions and offer help



4. After Your Visit

- Follow up on anything you said you would do
- Send a thank you note



Making a Telephone Call



A phone call is another way to speak to your legislator, especially if there is not time to schedule a visit or send a letter or email. You will probably speak with a staff member.

During your call:

- Say your name
- With bills, identify it by the bill number



SENATE BILL No. XXX

House Bill No. XXXX

- Share how you feel about the issue



- Always be prepared and clear



- Like visits, be brief and focused



- Be polite and give your contact information. They may want to call you back or send an email.



Usually, the legislator's staff will make a note of your comments. In some cases they may want to know why you feel the way you do. They may ask you to send an email listing your concerns. If you don't have a computer, let them know.



Sending a Letter or Email



Letters or emails are also useful ways to let your legislator know how you feel about issues.

- Like a visit, keep letters and emails short but tell how you will be affected.



- If you are writing about a bill, list the bill number.

SENATE BILL No. XXX

House Bill No. XXXX

- Do not use form letters and emails because they are not thought to be as meaningful as a personal note.



- Sometimes, when a legislative hearing or vote is about to take place – a personal email may be the fastest way to make contact.



Sample Letter:

Dear Senator Stabenow,

My name is Ryan Nicholas Gray. As a self-determined individual with a disability, I am disappointed that you have not discussed self-determination in the U.S. Senate.

It is important to me that my elected representative supports and upholds self-determination rights for people with disabilities.

Self-determination matters to me because it gives people with disabilities the authority to participate in the democratic process, confirms their responsibility and right to determine their own destiny, teaches them to wisely budget the public funds allocated to them, provides them with the freedom to work, volunteer, and vote as they wish, and maintains the support network needed to provide our services.

In my life, self-determination has made a significant difference. Because of self-determination, I have been able to interview local reporter Karen Drew on a television show that I co-host, I have won awards for volunteering and public

service, and I've been able to participate in Speech Crafters, a local program that helps me to develop my public speaking skills. None of this would have happened without Community Living Services of Oakland County or their self-determination program — I would not have even known my own rights.

I hope that you and your colleagues can find the opportunity to think about what I've presented today and that you can make services for people with disabilities a priority.

Thank you.

Ryan Nicholas Gray



After Your Contact

Keep it Up!

Your Senator or Representative need to hear from you on a regular basis to know what you want.



- Don't feel bad if your legislator votes against something you supported.
- Be ready to repeat this process again the next time you visit, call, or write.



- Politics and creating bills changes. You never know when your issues might be the same as those of your legislator.
- Developing an on-going relationship is helpful.

- As you visit and/or write your legislator you get to know their interests and they get to know yours.



- It is helpful to know how your legislator votes.



- If your legislator votes in favor of something you support, send a brief email or letter of thanks. It is important that your legislators know that you follow their voting record.



Glossary

Bill	A new law or change to an existing law.
Constituents	People represented by a legislator. For example if you live in Senator Schuitmaker's district, you are one of her constituents.
District	Districts are an area of a town or county. They are set up based on the number of people in an area to make sure Senators and Representatives have an equal number of people.
Form Letter or Email	Pre-written letter that you only need to sign. Not as useful as a personal letter
Legislators	Members of the Michigan House of Representatives or Senate. Each legislator represents a part of Michigan called a district and each district is numbered.
Legislature	Senate and House of Representatives, with 38 members in the Senate and 110 members in the House of Representatives. Every person in Michigan lives in a specific Senate and House District, and is represented by one Senator and one Representative.

Resource List

- To find out if you are **registered to vote** go to:
<https://webapps.sos.state.mi.us/mivote/votersearch.aspx>
- To find the name and contact information for your **Michigan Representative** go to: <http://www.house.mi.gov/mhrpublic/>
- To find the name and contact information for your **Michigan Senator** go to: <http://www.senate.michigan.gov/fysenator/fysenator.htm>
- To find your **U.S. Senators** (you have 2) go to:
http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm?State=MI
- To find your **U.S. Representative** go to:
<http://www.house.gov/representatives/> in the upper right hand corner next to a picture of the U.S. is a place to enter your zip code.
- **Citizen's Guide to State Government - Michigan:**
<http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/publications/citizensguide.pdf>
- **Our Government – the Legislative Branch (U.S.)**
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/our-government/legislative-branch>
- **Michigan – How a Bill Becomes a Law**
http://www.michigan.gov/som/0,4669,7-192-29701_29704-2836--,00.html

■ **U.S. How a Bill Becomes a Law**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KKvY0Q3tI6I>

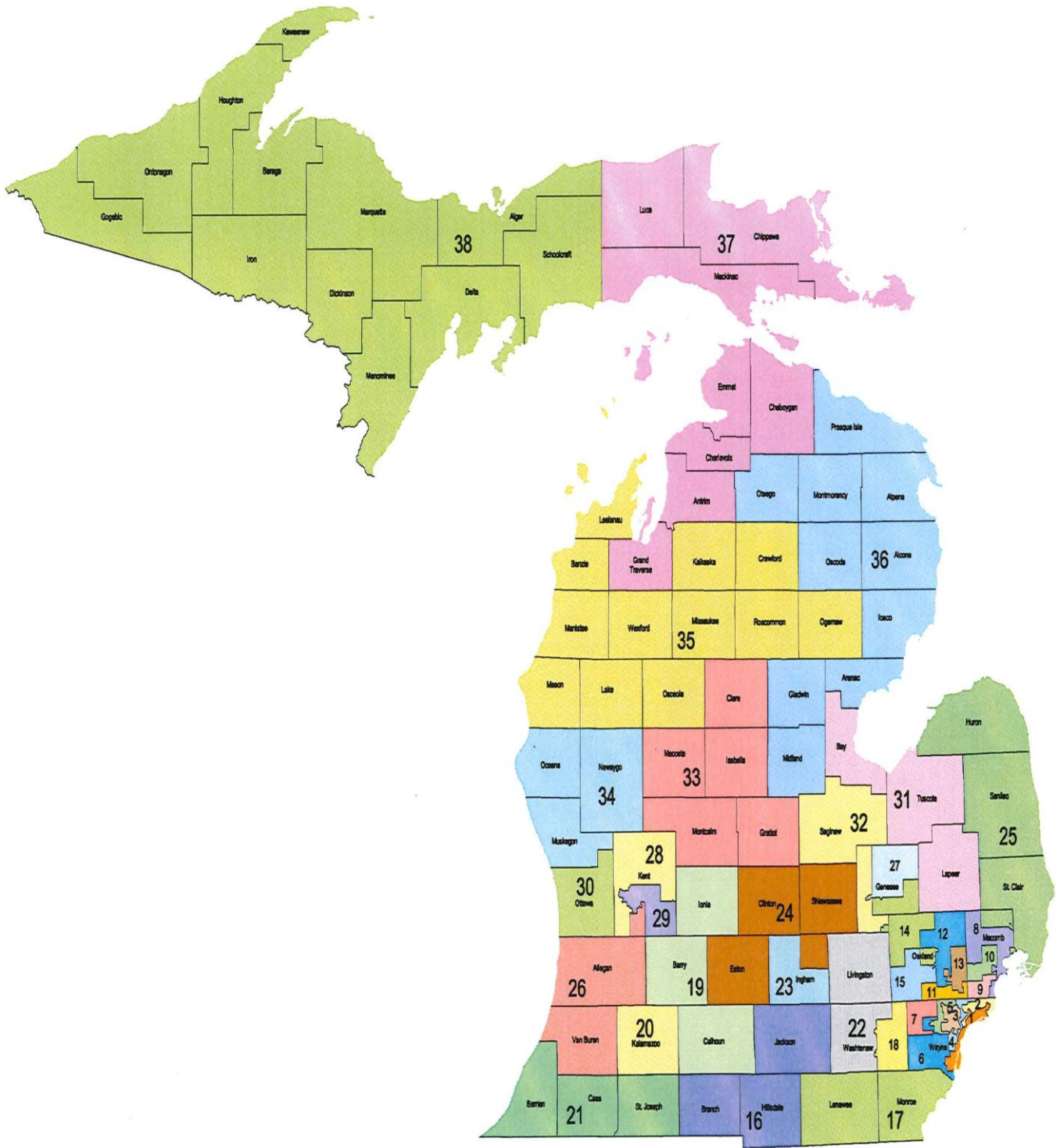
■ **To look up Michigan Bills**

<http://www.legislature.mi.gov/%28S%28i50sga55dvrwg355gxxhg155%29%29/mileg.aspx?page=home>

■ **To look up U.S. Bills** <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/thomas.php>

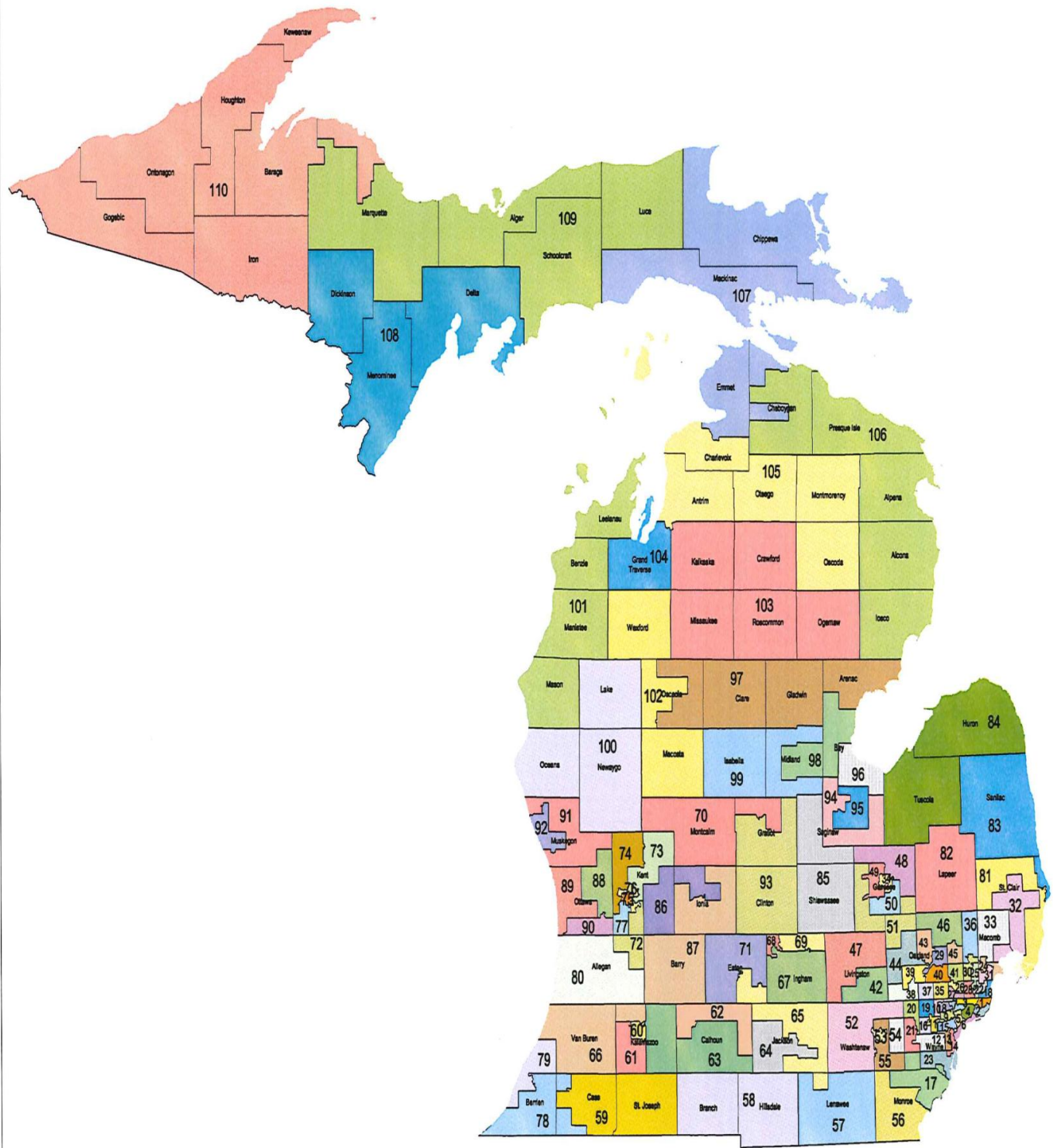


State Senate





State House



Tear Off Work Sheet

1. Your Elected Officials

Name	
Contact Info	
Staff Member	
Contact Info	

2. Your Issues

What do you support or oppose?
Bill Number and author

3. Why do you support or oppose

Personal story, work experience, or official position 1. 2. 3.
Suggestions or Recommendations
Answers to questions you might be asked



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