

Steps for Creating a Legislative Action Alert

Every Action Alert should provide a brief description of the legislation on the front side of the flyer. The two options for creating the description are available:- Get the information from a pro-family organization.- Write your own description. If you use information from an outside source be sure to give proper credit.

Provide A Brief Description of the Legislation. Most pro-family organizations are happy to allow you to use their legislative descriptions. However, it is always wise to ask permission. Using an organization's description is simply a matter of cutting and pasting text into your document. As mentioned above, more experienced ministry leaders may decide to write their own legislative description. Remember that this requires thorough research and a good understanding of the legislative process. We suggest limiting your bill description to no more than three main points. This will help people remember the most important issues about the bill.

Request that Specific Action Steps be Taken. The Action Alert will ask the reader to take specific action steps. Normally, this will involve asking people to call, write or visit their legislator and urge him or her to vote "Yes" or "No" on a specific bill. For example, "Contact your Assembly Member and urge a 'No' vote on Senate Bill (SB) 48. Pro-family organizations sending email updates to you will often provide suggested action steps. We have found it best to issue Action Alerts only for the most important bills. This helps to prevent the congregation from feeling overwhelmed with too many calls for action. There are two points of view regarding the timing and frequency of calling for action on proposed legislation. Each of these approaches has pros and cons. The first method will result in three calls to action for each piece of legislation. In the example, we used legislation identified as SB 48. This method would initiate an Action Alert flier when SB 48 is going: 1) to a vote in the Senate, 2) to a vote in the Assembly, and 3) to the Governor for his/her signature. These actions will take place over several months during the legislative session.

Legislation at the federal level is similar. Initiate the call to action when a bill is going: 1) to a vote in the Senate, 2) to a vote in the House, and 3) to the President for a signature.

Pro: The limited number of Action Alerts will not be overwhelming to the readers. **Con:** There are fewer opportunities to impact the process.

The second method may result in at least seven Action Alerts for each piece of legislation. Using this method, an Action Alert will be initiated when a bill is being voted on in each committee that hears the legislation as well as when it comes to a vote in each legislative house and when it reaches the governor for a signature. (Learn more about committees as you study the legislative process.)

Pro: Legislators, who are contacted throughout the bill's entire process, will take notice of the public's interest

Con: People may become overwhelmed and stop responding if asked to take action seven times on one bill.

Most churches will use the first option--especially if the ministry is monitoring more than one bill per legislative year. This would result in three action alerts per bill. The second option may be too aggressive for some churches.

4. Contact Information

There are two options for providing contact information for state and federal legislators.

Option One:

Provide legislators' names and contact information on the action alert. It should include:

1. Legislator's name and title
2. District office address
3. Phone and fax number
4. Cities within the legislative district
5. Email address (Optional)

Provide contact information for each legislator who represents those who live in close proximity to the church. For some churches, this may be only one legislator. For churches that draw from multiple legislative districts, information for several legislators will need to be included. This information can be obtained at your state's official legislative website. Some research may be necessary if several districts are close to your location.

Option Two:

Provide a phone number for the appropriate government office that will help a citizen obtain contact information for their specific legislator based on their residence address. Use your state's official legislative website to find the General Information phone number. Call that number to make sure they will provide legislators' contact information to any citizen.

The federal government also provides an information phone number available for all citizens: Call 1-800-FED INFO (1-800-333-4636) for any question about Government.

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