

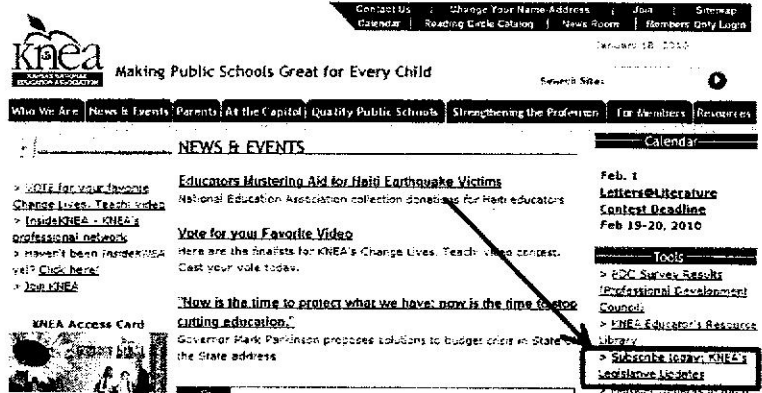
Online Advocacy: Easy as A, B, C!

Are you interested in making a difference? Would you like to advance the cause of a great public school for every child, a strong teaching profession, and the well-being of KNEA members? You can! Become an effective advocate for the issues critical to teachers and students in Kansas with these *three* easy steps (and KNEA as your guide).

A – Stay connected...

Get daily *Under the Dome* updates by clicking the link on the KNEA home page (under the "Tools" menu) to receive **Legislative Updates**. Read the daily email updates and especially watch and respond to **Action Alerts**.

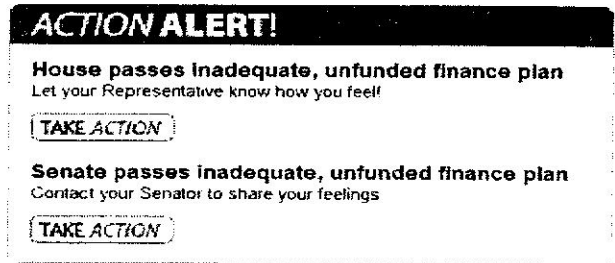
An alternative plan: from the **At the Capitol** page, click the link to sign up to receive only the **Action Alerts**.



B – Respond to the alerts...

When you receive an **Action Alert**, Click the **Take Action** button and get step by step help writing your e-mail or snail mail to your legislator.

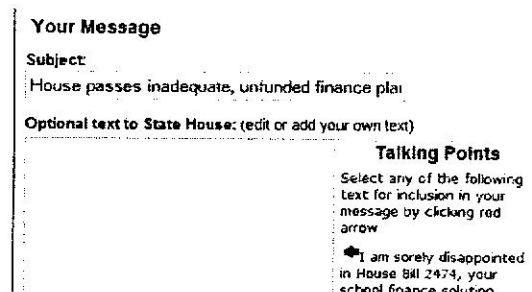
An alternative plan: Click the "At the Capitol" link on the KNEA home page any time and then either click "Action Alert" or the "Contact my legislator" In either case, just enter your zip code to bring up an email message box for YOUR legislators. When prompted to enter your email address, remember to use your HOME email address (not your school email account).



C – Use the talking points...

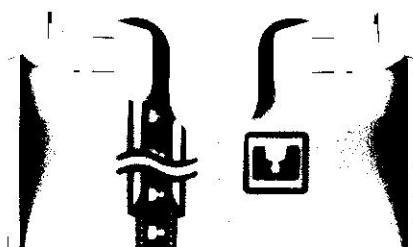
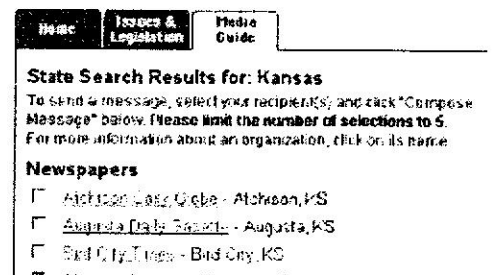
Getting the message right is crucial. When using the online email contact form, you will be prompted with "Talking Points". Click any talking point and it will automatically be added to the email message. You can ALSO customize the message by typing your own story integrated with the "Talking Points."

Even if you are composing a message for "snail mail" delivery, you can use this space to get suggested talking points... or even to draft the message to copy and paste in a Word document.



Extra Credit – Encourage others to act...

Forward *Under the Dome* or an **Action Alert** to a colleague. Encourage others to sign up to receive the messages directly. And using suggested talking points as a guide, click the "Talk to the Press" link on the **At the Capitol** page of the KNEA web site to send a letter to the editor of any newspaper in Kansas.



Additional Tips for Effective Advocacy

Elected officials care what their mail says. A logical courteous letter carries weight; it can change a legislator's mind, particularly when the legislator is wavering on an issue. It is important that your message be written as effectively as possible. Here are a few points.

Content:

- **Keep it brief...** but don't sacrifice clarity and completeness. Two pages is a maximum but one page is best. Use your own words and not form letters.
- **Identify yourself...** so they know that you live and/or work in their district.
- **Keep it focused...** on one subject. Otherwise, you decrease the force of your argument and complicate your legislator's efforts to act.
- **Get to the point...** at the outset and use the remainder of the letter to expand your views. Be constructive suggesting alternatives or better solutions, if possible. A few strong, well thought out points will be more influential than a laundry list of reasons.
- **Use facts...** even if the issue is emotion-laden. Beware of the nonfactual argument. It will make your legislator less willing to consider your point next time, too.
- **Relate it to home...** emphasizing the effect of legislation on your legislator's own constituents and/or school districts. Give facts AND illustrations - your own knowledge and experience to inform the legislator. Legislators seldom change their minds because of a philosophical argument; well-reasoned examples carry more weight.
- **Provide background as needed.** Don't assume that a legislator is as well informed as you about a problem. A legislator can't keep abreast of everything. Explain the situation, what you think and why.
- **Make specific recommendations.**
- **Keep it positive.** Your attitude is important. A polite, positive-sounding letter is more likely to impress than one that is negative, rude, or threatening. Avoid being antagonistic. Point out the benefits of your position.
- **Use KNEA Resources...** such as "Talking Points" from the KNEA leader resources or the "Legislative" information section of the **KNEA web site** to get valuable support and rationale for education issues.
- **Close with a friendly appeal,** regardless of the action you urge.
- **Allow for follow-up.** Include contact information and offer to act as a resource should the legislator (or staff) have questions or need additional information. Where appropriate, indicate in the letter that you will follow up with a phone call.

Format:

- **Correct address.** Use the correct name and address for your legislator (see next page).
- **Follow etiquette.** Every legislator is called "Honorable" on the envelope and inside address. In the salutation, address house members as "Dear Representative _____" while senators are called "Senator _____." Spell the name correctly. During a legislative session, send correspondence to their office; otherwise send to home or business. Get address information from the KNEA web site.
- **Return address information.** For letters, include your name and address on the envelope and letter.
- **Reference bills by number.** Refer to all bills by name and number when possible.
- **Write legibly or type,** use correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Do not depend on spell check or grammar check to catch all errors.
- **End cordially.** Thank them for their help and consideration. "Sincerely," is an appropriate closing.
- **Follow up thanks.** Send a note of thanks if your legislator supports your issue or a note of disappointment if they do not. If they send information you request, also send a note of thanks.
- **Don't give up.** To be truly effective, sending more than one letter during a session is a good idea.
- **Avoid informal language.** Especially with E-mail to a legislator should be treated as seriously as a snail-mail letter. Resist the temptation to use the informal language and symbols often associated with e-mail communications. Never use impolite language or make "demands."

