

This is KPTZ 91.9FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Nigel O'Shea bringing you news and commentary from the Jefferson County *Beacon* for Wednesday, March 19, 2025.

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Rachel Perkins wants you to keep calling your representatives in congress and would like to share a service that can help you do so.

In the 8 or so weeks since Trump took office, phones at the US Capitol Building in DC have been (almost literally) melting down, thanks in part to users of a service named 5Calls. The ancient phone system at the Capitol typically sees about 40 calls a minute, but as I write this, the Senate is voting on the most recent budget Continuing Resolution (CR) and many callers are reporting "all circuits are busy" errors, or voicemail systems hanging up before allowing a message to be left. Just under a month ago, members of Congress were reporting upwards of 1,600 calls per minute, most of which were from constituents expressing anger about Elon Musk's unqualified DOGE staffers' indiscriminate slashing of critical services – and the Capitol phone system had to be taken down for maintenance for several hours overnight.

These may be unprecedented times, but it's always a good time to call your representation. Despite much evidence to the contrary in some locales, these folks work for you, and you are entitled to have your voice heard by them. The all-volunteer team I'm part of at 5 Calls Civic Action (which is a 501(c)(4) civic nonprofit) has been working together for 8 years to help make that process easier.

In early 2017, when Trump took office the first time, many people felt shocked and disempowered. Some of us who had worked on or adjacent to the Clinton campaign were not ready to give up trying to get our voices heard by our legislators. I had just finished a volunteer gig working on a tool to help phone-shy constituents record voicemails that were delivered to legislators' inboxes overnight, and I was looking for more ways to help people reach their reps. A mutual friend connected me to a small group working on a website to do just that, and I got involved. Initially the website was our main offering, but in the intervening years we've also developed mobile apps for iPhone and Android devices that use your native phone app to call when you tap the numbers for your legislators. 5Calls uses your zip code to look up your legislators and show you who you should call. We offer a constantly updated and prioritized list of topics to call about, but you're also encouraged to use the information to call about any topic you want. There's a researched background brief with links to sources on every topic, and a sample script for you to use if you want, which automatically fills in the name of the rep you're calling. And of course, everything is free to use. There are no ads. We don't keep (or sell) any information about you as an individual or who you call, except to track things like total number of calls made by folks in your district or state, what topics people are calling about the most, or if a given Senator's voicemail never gets emptied.

Working with the other dozen or so long-term volunteers at 5Calls has been hugely beneficial to me on a personal level. Delivering this service that gives constituents a voice helps keep me from sinking into a depression about everything, and as the person who also answers emails from our users, I know it's helping others feel less powerless as well.

One of the common types of email we receive is from people who think there's no point in calling their reps – either they're already doing what that person wants, or they're leaning all the way the other direction and aren't listening to their constituents at all. To this I say: Right now, the power of our calls is more about the overall news cycle of legislators being flooded with calls – more about ensuring these reps don't think we don't see what they're doing, and making sure our allies know they're not alone – than it is about changing your rep's mind on something specific. If these legislators are getting enough angry calls, they just might think twice before voting to cut Social Security and Medicare, or sell public lands to the highest bidder.

As of right now, 5Calls users have made more than 7 million calls to their representation, with about 3 million of those calls made since the most recent inauguration. You can find more information and make calls to your legislators at [5calls.org](http://5calls.org) That's the number 5 c-a-l-l-s dot org.

Opinion and commentary by Rachel Perkins. Stay informed with Jefferson County community-centered independent news delivered weekly to your inbox. Go to [jeffcobeacon dot com](http://jeffcobeacon.com) and sign up by submitting your email address at the bottom of the page.

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KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon and 5 Tuesday through Thursday, partnering on Wednesday to bring you stories from the *Jefferson County Beacon*. This is Nigel O'Shea. Thanks for listening.