

E-MAIL UPDATES and Distribution Lists in Outlook 2003

By Grace McMillan and Shannon Sharpton

E-mail updates are a great way for any office to communicate with people on a regular basis. Regular e-mail updates from your office keep your increasingly aware and concerned recipients informed of current issues and better yet, they are FREE, which is great during our state's current economic struggles.

Here are the steps:

Every time your office sends out an e-mail or letter to people, insert this in the final paragraph: "If you would be interested in receiving regular e-mail updates about [legislative] events of interest from this office, please send an e-mail to [insert e-mail address] and put "E-mail Update" in the subject line. We are glad to keep you informed" (or whatever wording your office administration agrees on). Outgoing e-mails can include this as part of the automatic signature, so you only have to input it once.

If your office or agency has a web site, ask your web administrator to put a form on the web site that takes at least the following information: First Name, Last Name, E-mail Address. I also like to add a date/time stamp to the form because it helps me organize, but that's up to you. Google has a form that's easily inserted for free and it has the added benefit of capturing the data and auto-populating a spreadsheet (no data entry for you) that you can regularly import into Excel and then into Outlook.

The next step is to build a "Distribution List" in Outlook so that when your office is ready to send an update, all you have to do is copy and paste into Outlook, add your recipient list with one click (because you keep adding names to the same list, it builds upon itself), and send your e-mail update with one click to all your recipients at the same time.

IMPORTANT: When sending your e-mail to a distribution list, put YOUR OWN e-mail address in the "To" field ... and put the recipient list into the "BCC" (blind carbon copy) field so that the recipients' e-mail addresses are hidden from each other.

E-mail updates are an incredibly effective and FREE service to your recipients – and they appreciate them so much because they requested them. You send the updates ONLY to people who have signed up to receive them.

Build a Distribution List in Outlook 2003:

Open Outlook.

Go to your top menu and click on "File" – then the bottom arrows to expand your options.

Select "New > Distribution List."

Name the list "E-mail Updates."

Click on "Add New."

Enter the Display Name (recipient's first and last name) and E-mail Address and then click "OK."

Note: you can also use Google Groups to send out e-mail updates if you have a gmail address and wish to implement this process from any computer without the use of Microsoft Outlook at your office computer. Google's services are free and include cool features like a free online word processing program (Google Docs), spreadsheets, forms, groups, etc.

www.thehouseandsenate.com

Sharing our knowledge with others