



▲ **Texting for Information**

In follow-up to Boyd Johnson's tip on Google's 411 information service (July *Bench & Bar*): another method of getting [free] information is by sending an SMS text message from your cell phone (or handheld device like a BlackBerry) to 46645 (Googl), including the name of the business or person you are looking for in the body of the message, e.g., "Rick's Oyster Bar, Chaska." Google will text you with the name, address, and telephone number. Google's SMS, which stands for Short Message Service, also provides answers to other general queries, such as how to calculate a tip or how many ounces are in a pound.

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▲ **Email Communication**

For short email communications, consider putting the entire message in the subject line and ending with "EOM" which means end of message. Your recipient will know he or she does not need to bother opening the message. Like so: "Will arrive in office @ 2:30. EOM." Leave the message body blank.

To head off superfluous responses stick NRN in your subject line—no response necessary. Put it right at the beginning, where it will be



conspicuous. The recipient can read the message, make a mental note, and will know not to clutter your inbox with an unnecessary "Thanks!" message.

Conversely, if you expect a reply, use RR—reply requested—to make sure you get one.

It may not work the first few times, but as word spreads, you and your correspondents will appreciate the little bits of time saved here and there.

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▼ **Election Time-off**

With the upcoming general election on November 4, it's an opportune time for employers and employees to be reminded of their rights and obligations with respect to time off for voting.

Employees in Minnesota are entitled to time off from work on Election Day. Under Minn. Stat. § 204C.04, subd. 1, employers must permit their workers who are eligible voters to be absent from work in order to vote "during the morning of the day of that election." Employers cannot penalize employees or dock salary or wages because of the absence. Violation of this law is a misdemeanor.

The statute establishes a minimum. Employers may have policies allowing employee leave for voting purposes. Collective bargaining agreements, which cover about 15% of the work force, often include additional election leave provisions that are more extensive than the state law minimum.

The mechanisms to enforce these provisions vary. County attorneys can prosecute violations. The statutory leave also can be enforced through an employer's policy and may, in that event, be pursued through a breach of contract claim. The failure by a



unionized employer to abide by a leave provision in a collective bargaining agreement usually is subject to remedy through the grievance and arbitration provisions of the bargaining agreement.

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▲ **Appellate Resources**

Facing issues on appeal and not sure where to start? Apart from the MSBA's own *practicelaw*, which includes appellate brief templates and other resources, the Minnesota State Law Library maintains a free online Minnesota appellate courts brief collection (www.lawlibrary.state.mn.us/briefs.html). The library maintains the parties' statement of issues for all published decisions since January 2002, excluding attorney discipline cases. For many decisions after September 2005, full text briefs from both parties are available as a downloadable PDF. The library maintains a list of the cases in its brief collection, including a handy notation indicating that the case has the parties' briefs available for download.

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