



Tips for Writing to Elected Officials

Writing a letter to your elected official is one of the easiest ways of conveying your thoughts and concerns on an issue to elected officials. Taking five minutes to write a letter does make a difference.

Letters to your own legislator are especially important. When an elected official receives numerous letters on a specific issue, it does influence their vote. Some tips for writing a letter to an elected official follow:

- Use your own stationery. A neatly typed or legibly handwritten letter on your own stationery is best.
- Write your own thoughts and words. Form letters or preprinted postcards are not as impressive as an original letter in your own words. Write about your personal experience and how the issue affects you.
- Be brief and not overly dramatic.
- Be clear on your position. Be sure you clearly state your position on the issue. Show your knowledge of the issue, but in a concise format. Be direct and firm, but not hostile.
- Identify yourself. If you have met the legislator before, personalize the letter by noting briefly when and where that occurred so they can place a face with your name.
- Address elected officials properly (e.g. "The Honorable _____").
- Be concise. A one page letter is more likely to be read than a longer one. Write about only one issue in your letter.
- Mention legislation. If appropriate, cite a specific bill number and name or its principal sponsors. If the bill is not well known, a short summary of the bill may be necessary to include in your letter.

- Request a specific action. Be sure to state exactly what you want the elected official to do. If appropriate, ask the legislator to vote for a particular bill or amendment, request a hearing, or co-sponsor a bill.
- Ask for a reply. If you ask a question or request something, ask the legislator for a reply to your letter. Ask that your legislator state his or her position on the issue in a reply.
- Include a return address. Ensure that you include a return address in your letter.
- Mail the letter. Particularly for local elected officials, mail the letter directly to where the legislative session is held. If the legislature is not in session, send the letter to the legislator's home office address.
- Write a follow-up letter. If you asked for a reply and did not receive one, write another letter asking for a response. If the legislator complied with your request (e.g., voted favorably for a bill), send a thank you note. It is a refreshing change to most letters they receive.