

WRITING YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

E-mail messages, faxes and letters are an extremely effective way of communicating with your elected officials. Many legislators believe that this correspondence represents not only the position of the writer but also many other constituents who did not take the time to write.

Due to increased security measures, it can take a long time for postal mail to be delivered. This means that sending physical letters is practically useless for activism purposes.

- Address the legislator appropriately. Your salutation should read, "Dear Senator/Representative (last name):" (If you are sending a regular letter, write The Honorable (full name of legislator) on the envelope.)
- Identify yourself as a constituent.
- Give the name and bill number if possible, and specify what action you want the legislator to take.
- State your reason for writing. Explain why you care about the issue and provide personal examples if possible.
- Focus on the one issue and keep it brief.
- Be factual. If you have a statistic or two that supports your argument, include it.
- If you are a person of faith, state that in relation to the issue.
- Be courteous. Above all, do not be hostile or threatening.
- Be sure to include your postal address in any message or letter that you send and ask the legislator to state his or her position in a reply.
- Though you may have sent an e-mail, a response will likely come via postal mail. Don't be surprised if what you receive is a standard response letter.
- If your questions were not answered, write again or telephone and ask for an appointment. Stress the importance of this issue to you, but do so in a courteous manner.
- After a vote, give feedback. If your legislator voted as you wished, thank him or her. If the vote was not as you wished, communicate your disappointment cordially.

SAMPLE LETTER

to an Elected Official

(Your letterhead and/or contact info)

Date

The Honorable _____

Dear _____:

I am writing you to urge you to support/oppose Bill Number _____ which would (explain expected consequences of the proposed legislation).

Briefly state why you support/oppose the proposed legislation. Use personal experience, observation and a few statistics to strengthen your argument.

I urge you to vote yes/no on Bill Number _____ so that (the general effects of the legislation will/will not effect constituents).

Sincerely,

Your name/title, if any

Your address