

# Write an Effective Letter to Your Legislator

**Keep it brief-** Keep letters to one page. Try to discuss only one bill or issue in a letter.

**Identify yourself-** Begin with an introduction of yourself or the organization on whose behalf you are writing. Use a simple statement, such as "I am a third-grade teacher at \_\_\_\_\_ elementary school" or "On behalf of the members of the \_\_\_\_\_...."

**Get to the point-** Follow your introduction with a brief statement of your issue or concern, such as "We urge your support for \_\_\_\_\_." If you are writing in reference to a specific bill, include the bill number. Follow your opening paragraph with a concise explanation of why you support or oppose the particular bill or issue. A few strong, well-thought-out arguments are more effective than a laundry list of reasons to support or oppose a bill. Whenever possible, use bullet points to outline your arguments.

**Relate it to home -** Help the legislator understand why your position is important to his or her constituents. Include specific facts about how a bill will impact the citizens of his or her district. If possible, include a local anecdote illustrating the problem you are seeking to address. Avoid the use of form letters or generic postcards — use your own knowledge and experience to inform the legislator.

**Be Respectful -** Use the correct title in the address: "The Honorable..." and the correct salutation "Dear Senator..." or "Dear Representative..." Never accuse, use impolite language, sarcasm, or make "demands." Write your thoughts in a respectful way always assuming your letter will be read with concern and respect.

**Avoid informal language -** An E-mail or letter to a legislator should be seriously written. Do not use informal language and symbols often associated with e-mail communications.

**Allow for follow-up -** Include specific contact information and offer to act as a resource should the legislator or staff have questions or need additional information. Where appropriate, state in the letter that you will follow up with a telephone call.

**Include your full address and zip code -** Many legislative offices screen letters and e-mails for address information identifying the sender as a constituent. Those outside the district are unlikely to be read and may be blocked by email filtering programs.

**Address your letter correctly-** The following template will help you locate your federal and state legislators and properly address your correspondence: <http://capwiz.com/nea/wi>

## State and National Legislator Directory

State Agencies and Mailing Addresses	<a href="https://legis.wisconsin.gov/About/Contact">https://legis.wisconsin.gov/About/Contact</a>
Your State Legislators	<a href="http://maps.legis.wisconsin.gov">http://maps.legis.wisconsin.gov</a>
Any State Legislator	<a href="http://legis.wisconsin.gov">http://legis.wisconsin.gov</a>
Your Federal Legislators	<a href="https://whoismyrepresentative.com">https://whoismyrepresentative.com</a>