

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	https://legis.wisconsin.gov/About/Contact
Your State Legislators	http://legis.wisconsin.gov
Your Federal Representative	https://whosmyrepresentative.com