

How To Write Your Elected Officials

Many legislators view hundreds of letters on an issue significant. With the simple tools of a pen, paper, an envelope and a stamp (or in today's world, a quick email), you can play a role in shaping your representative's opinions. Letter writing is one of the best ways to keep in touch with federal, state, county, and local elected officials.

Here are some simple tips you can use in writing to your legislator or other elected official. Much of this is common sense, but it's always good to have a reminder.

- **Be brief.** A short letter is more effective than pages of documentation. For elected officials, it boils down to a "yes" or "no" because that is how they must vote.
- **Be specific.** When you write about a specific bill, be sure to include the bill's number, title, and sponsor. Deal with only one subject in your letter.
- **Be confident.** Draw from your own experiences and opinions, which shows elected officials that you are passionate about the issue you are writing about.
- **Include your address.** It is important to an elected official whether or not you live in his district because he will want to know if you will be voting for or against him in the next election.
- **Personalize your letter as much as possible.**
- **Be direct.** Let your elected official know what action you want him to take, such as introduce legislation, vote for or against a bill or speak out on an issue facing your community.
- **Be polite.** However much you might disagree with an official's position, do not threaten, insult, or call the elected official names. Your message will be more effective if the tone is restrained and respectful.
- **Keep your letter timely.** Keep track of when the issue will be discussed or voted on and send your letters at the appropriate time in the process.
- **Don't forget to compliment.** Some issues you might ask a legislator to support are tough issues, and a note of thanks will be appreciated and remembered.

For more information on how to contact your legislator, to locate your legislator, visit OAASC's web site Advocacy section.