

Letters to Legislators

Letter writing is probably the most widely used means of communicating with legislators, and they do pay attention to their mail. Legislators readily acknowledge that a good letter – particularly from a constituent – can make an impact. That is why it is so important that your letter is powerful.

Letters to your own senator or representative are especially important. You have three federal legislators (two senators and one representative) and two state legislators (one senator and one representative). To find your legislators go to: <http://capwiz.com/kschildren>. Select “My Elected Officials.” Type in your address and city.

Ensure that your letter will have maximum impact:

- ♦ The letter should be brief, preferably one page. Even if you feel strongly about the issue, resist the urge to tell the “whole story” in a long letter. A short, concise letter is much more effective. If you have a long story to tell, close with, “If you need additional information, please let me know.”
- ♦ A form letter, preprinted card, or other superficial means of communication has little effect. Generally, these are treated as one “contact,” and run the risk of annoying decision makers, rather than influencing them.
- ♦ If you are writing about a specific bill, include the bill number and a brief statement on the subject matter at the beginning of the letter. Because thousands of bills are introduced each session, it is impossible for individual legislators to track all of them.
- ♦ Discuss only one bill or issue in your letter. This makes it far easier for legislators or staff to track. If you wish to comment on several issues, write separate letters.
- ♦ Your letter should be neat and your tone sincere and polite. Guard against complaining or being overly negative. Do not threaten or belittle.

Your letter should contain the following components:

- ♦ A brief statement (ten words or less) on the subject and the bill number if you are writing about a specific bill.
- ♦ An introduction of yourself which tells why you are interested in or concerned about an issue or bill.
- ♦ A personal anecdote about how the bill will affect you, your family, your community, your business, your job, your school, etc.
- ♦ Some facts, including supporting information and data to support your position.
- ♦ An invitation to contact you to discuss the bill.
- ♦ A request for a reply if you need one.
- ♦ A statement of appreciation for consideration of your position.