

# Write a Letter to Your Elected Official

**Step up and take action!** Writing a personal letter is a great way to communicate with your elected officials. Personalized letters are well-received by elected officials, as they know it takes time to write a letter with a well-thought out message. Use the following tips to help you write a compelling letter:

## Before Writing the Letter

Find out who your elected officials are. Visit [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) and enter your zip code to determine who represents you in the House of Representatives. Visit [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) and select your state to identify your two U.S. Senators. On both of these websites, you will find links to your members of Congress' websites to obtain their contact information. Use [www.congress.org](http://www.congress.org) to find your Governor and State Legislators.

Gather appropriate information. Find out your elected official's voting record. The official's website is a resource to learn where she/he stands on various issues. It is also important to gather local and state facts/information to illustrate the issue's impact on the area your elected official represents. If you cannot find this information, don't worry – you should still write the letter.

## Writing the Letter

- **Keep it short.** Limit your letter to one page.
- **Identify yourself.** In the first paragraph of your letter immediately state who you are and the city/zip code that you live in. It is very important that your elected official know that you are their constituent.
- **Identify the issue.** Also, in the first paragraph clearly state the issue that your letter addresses. If your letter is referring to a specific bill, identify it by name and number if possible (i.e. H.R. 1234 or S. 6789). If you need to look up a bill number check [www.thomas.gov](http://www.thomas.gov). Remember, it is okay if you cannot find it – still write the letter.
- **Focus on your main points.** Support the issue you are addressing with key statistics, compelling facts, and/or condensed background information. Keep your points concise and clearly focused on the issue. Try not to overload your letter with excess information – your message might get lost in the excessive content.
- **Personalize your letter.** Express appropriate conviction and emotion in your letter to add strength and to express sincerity of this issue to you. State why the issue is important to you and tell how the issue affects you, your family, your community, your state and/or your nation. Be specific, but concise.
- **Hold your elected official accountable.** Be specific about the action(s) you would like for your elected official to take on the issue (i.e. supporting certain legislation, not supporting certain legislation, etc.) and/or other ways your elected official can help with the issue (i.e. creating a program to address a need in the community, expanding services, etc.). Remind your elected official that you will follow his/her response to the issue and it will affect how you vote in future elections.
- **Ask for a reply.** Thank your elected official for reading the letter and ask for a reply with his/her position on the issue and how he/she will address the issue. Be sure to include your name and address on both your letter and envelope to ensure appropriate delivery of your elected official's response to you.

## After Writing the Letter

Follow the issue. Continue to follow the issue and how your elected official works to address the issue. As your elected official makes decisions on the issue, contact him/her to either say thank you for addressing the issue in a manner that you feel is appropriate or to express your disappointment in their response and your desire to see him/her address the issue differently.

**Addressing the envelope.** If you are writing to a member of Congress, use the following template to address the envelope:

The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

o r    The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515