



Tips for Writing to Legislators

- **Use personal or organizational stationery** if mailing or use the legislator's contact form for timely opinions. The contact form is designed to remind you of essentials: complete contact information that shows that you are a constituent and the topic of your letter.
- **If you are establishing a relationship on the issue by writing regularly, do use the mail.** Knowledgeable constituents and regular donors who regularly weigh in on issues have their letters directly put in legislators' hands. Other letters are read by aides and logged as to support or opposition.
- **Use Proper Salutation.** The salutation should be "Dear Representative Smith" or "Dear Senator Smith" depending on the office held. The address should read: Honorable Jim Smith, Address, City, State, Zip.
- **Be polite and informative.** Begin the letter with a short paragraph that describes the issue and the request you are making. An example of a standard opening sentence is: "I am writing about HB 1234, the Automatic Voter Registration Act, currently before the legislature. I encourage you to support this legislation as written" or "I am writing about SB123, legislation which would eliminate peace officer training for armed school personnel. Please oppose this legislation on the grounds that ..."
- **Focus on Key Points.** Don't make the communication too wordy. Try to use common terms and language. Don't use specialized jargon. A one-page letter is ideal, but two pages are acceptable. Stay on message! Avoid discussing tangential issues that will dilute or confuse that message.
- **If you have background or are trained in a related field, use that information with your title.** Expert information does make a difference.
- **If you have a personal story related to the issue, tell your story.** Legislators cannot know everything that is happening. If everyone with a personal story would tell the story, legislators would have a better picture of the impact of legislation on their constituents.
- **Personal, original letters have greater impact than form letters.** There is a role for both. Form letters do help with immediate needs to show support or opposition to specific legislation.
- **Hint for mail campaigns:** Use postcards that are easily read and catalogued as to support or opposition. Use heavier stock since in really large campaigns mail is weighed rather than counted.
- **In Closing.** Simply recap the main points and encourage specific action. Don't be vague. Requests should be clear, concise and as specific as possible, such as to co-sponsor a bill. If you have background on the issue, offer to speak with the

legislator by providing a telephone number where you can be reached. If contacted by the policy maker or a staff member, be sure to make the time to talk or visit with that person.