

HOW TO WRITE YOUR FEDERAL OR STATE LEGISLATORS

If visiting your legislator in the district office, state capitol or Washington, DC is not possible, the next most effective form of communication is a letter. A personal letter is an effective way to convey your views and let your legislator know what bills or issues are important to constituents.

- The addresses for your legislators are listed in the telephone directory. Your U. S. Congressional District, state senate and house of representatives district numbers are listed on your voter registration card.
- Identify yourself, including your address and phone number. Handwritten letters should be legible. If you are writing about a specific piece of legislation, include the house or senate bill number, if known.
- Write a compelling paragraph about why you are supporting or opposing a particular issue or piece of legislation. Personal experiences are your best supporting evidence. Explain how these issues would affect you, your family, your business, your community or your state.
- "Form letters", the same letter sent by several individuals, tend to be ignored and viewed as special interest groups trying to apply pressure as part of an organized letter writing campaign.
- Timing is important. Write about your position on a bill when it is assigned to committee, before a vote, if your legislator is a member of the committee. If a bill is coming to a floor vote, your legislator will be counting the pro and con opinions expressed by the constituency.
- **BE PERSUASIVE AND REASONABLE.** Threats or abusive language will harm the cause rather than help.
- Ask your legislator to reply and state what his/her position is on the bill or issue. As a constituent, you have a right to know where they stand.
- Write your legislator after their votes. Thank them if the vote favors your position. If the vote is against your position, reiterate why you are opposed.