

# How to Write a Letter to Your Legislator

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It's important to build long-term relationships with your Congressional Representatives. Good relationships start with good communication! Follow these guidelines when writing to your Representatives and Senators.

## **THE CORRECT (AND MOST FREQUENTLY USED) ADDRESSES ARE:**

- **To your Senator:** The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_ (full name)  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510
- **To your Representative:** The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_ (full name)  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

## **OTHER INFORMATION**

- **“Sincerely yours” is appropriate** as a complimentary close. Sign your full name.
- **Forms similar to the above**, addressed to your state capital, are appropriate for your state representatives and senators.
- **Where possible, use your official letterhead.** If you are writing as an individual, use plain white bond paper, and give your official title following your signature to identify yourself and to indicate your competency to address the subject.

## **E-MAIL**

- **Closely follow the general good form for regular letter writing.** Most offices respond only by written correspondence through “snail mail”, so be sure to include your regular post address when using this form of communicating if you expect a response. Some offices may be inaccessible by e-mail addresses, visit these Websites.

- **CONTACTING SENATORS VIA THE INTERNET:**  
<http://www.senate.gov/senator/membmail.html>
- **THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES: WHO'S WHO AND HOW TO CONTACT THEM:**  
<http://www.house.gov/Whoswho.html>

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

- See "Effective Ways to Communicate With Legislators" at:  
<http://www.ala.org/washoff/ways.html>

### **TIPS FOR SUCCESS:**

1. **Your legislators like to hear from home** and want to be kept informed of conditions in the district. Base your letter on your own pertinent experiences and observations.
2. **If writing about a specific bill**, describe it by number or by its popular name. Legislators have thousands of bills before them in the course of a year, and cannot always take time to figure out to which one you are referring.
3. **Legislators appreciate intelligent, well-thought-out letters** which present a definite position, even if they do not agree.
4. **Even more important and valuable to them is a concrete statement of the reasons** for your position-particularly if you are writing about a field in which you have specialized knowledge. Representatives have to vote on many matters with which they have had little or no firsthand experience. Some of the most valuable information they receive comes from facts presented in letters from people who have knowledge in the field.
5. **Short letters are almost always best.** Members of Congress receive many, many letters each day, and a lengthy one may not get as prompt a reading as a brief statement.

6. **Letters should be timed to arrive** while the issue is alive. Members of the committee considering the bill will appreciate having your views while the bill is ripe for study and action.
  
7. **Follow through with a thank you letter**, whenever possible.