

WRITING TO YOUR LEGISLATORS

Why should you write to your legislators?

Letters and e-mails can be particularly **effective in influencing legislators' views**. Writing to legislators also offers an opportunity to maintain contact and keep your issues on the front burner even when you cannot meet personally.

How do I write to my legislators?

- **Keep It Brief**

- Keep letters to one page. Try to discuss only one bill or issue per letter.

- **Identify Yourself**

- Begin with an introduction of yourself or the organization on whose behalf you are writing. Use a simple statement, such as "I am a third-grade teacher at _____ elementary school" or "On behalf of the members of the _____."

- **Get To The Point**

- Follow your introduction with a brief statement of your issue or concern, such as "We urge your support for H.R. _____, which will _____." If you are writing in reference to a specific bill, include the bill number.

- Follow your opening paragraph with a concise explanation of why you support or oppose the particular bill or issue. A few strong, well-thought-out arguments are much more effective than a laundry list of reasons to support or oppose a bill.

- Whenever possible, use bullet points to outline your arguments.

- **Relate It To Home**

- Help the legislator understand why your position is important to his or her constituents.

- Include specific facts about how a bill will impact educators, students or schools in the legislator's district. If possible, include a local anecdote illustrating the problem you are seeking to address. Avoid the use of form letters or generic postcards — use your own knowledge and experience to inform the legislator.

- **Allow For Follow-Up**

- Include specific contact information and offer to act as a resource should the legislator or staff have questions or need additional information. Where appropriate, state in the letter that you will follow up with a telephone call.

- **Using E-Mail**

- E-mail can be an easy and effective tool for communicating with legislators. The tips outlined above for writing letters to legislators also apply to e-mails: keep them brief and to the point, with facts and anecdotes relevant to the legislator's district.

- **Avoid Informal Language**

— E-mail to a legislator should be treated as seriously as a written letter. Resist the temptation to use the informal language and symbols often associated with e-mail communications. Never use impolite language or make "demands."

- **Include Your Full Address and Zip Code**

— Make sure the text of your e-mail includes your full name and street address, including zip code. Many legislative offices screen e-mails for address information identifying the sender as a constituent. E-mails that appear to come from outside the district are unlikely to be read and may be blocked by filtering programs.

- **Address Your Letter Correctly**

— See the details on addressing your letter below.

How Do I Properly Address Written Correspondence?

- **United States Senators**

The Honorable (full name)

United States Senate

Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator (last name)

- **For Members of the U.S. House of Representatives**

The Honorable (full name)

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative (last name)

- **Maryland Elected Officials**

— Visit <http://mdelect.net/> and enter your address. A list of your elected officials will show up in the form of a hyperlink. Click the hyperlink for their mailing and e-mail address.

Your polling place will also be listed!

- **Frederick County Elected Officials**

County Commissioners

Winchester Hall

12 E Church Street

Frederick, MD 21701

Dear Commissioner (last name)

Board of Education

191 South East Street

Frederick, MD 21701

Dear (last name)

