

Successful Advocacy: Writing Letters to Public Officials

Many factors affect a decision maker's vote on an issue: party lines, campaign contributors, special interests, and constituent opinion. As a constituent, it's important to contact decision makers about issues important to you and let them know your position. Decision makers count phone calls, letters (mail and e-mail), and office visits to determine constituent position, or indifference if very few constituent contacts are made about an issue.

When writing letters, whether via e-mail or regular mail, it's important to remember that during legislative sessions state officials receive approximately 500 e-mails and 100 letters per day and federal officials receive approximately 7,000 e-mails and 4000 letters per day. To make your voice heard in the midst of so many other constituents, keep these helpful tips in mind (all tips apply to both e-mail and mail):

- Correctly address your letter
- Place your address at the top or bottom of the page (envelopes get lost)
- Be courteous
- Keep your letter brief and to-the-point
- In a clearly separated area from the body of the letter, write:
 - The legislation name or bill number
 - Your stand on the issue
- Identify whether you are a voter in the legislator's district
- Provide your full name (no anonymous letters)
- Cover only one subject/issue/concern per letter
- Give reasons for your position
- Avoid emotional appeals, demands, threats or promises
- Request a reply
- Acknowledge receipt of a reply