

HOW TO: WRITE YOUR LEGISLATOR: PART I

Members of the State Legislature receive surprisingly few letters from their constituents. They pay a lot of attention to those they do receive.

DOS and DON'TS for Writing

DO use personal or business letterhead, if you have it. If not, write your complete address on the letter--envelopes get lost.

DO hand write your letter if your writing is legible; if not, type it, but always sign by hand. If your signature isn't legible, print or type your name underneath.

DO identify your bill by number, if possible.

DO identify yourself as a consumer, parent, etc. and explain how the issue personally affects you or someone you love.

DO be brief and stick with a single issue. Keep you letter to one page, although you could add a one-page fact sheet, newsletter article or other enclose.

DO say things in your own words. Even if you have a sample letter to follow, change it around so it sounds individual.

DO ask for a specific response. Ask whether the person will draft a bill for you, vote for or against a bill, etc. If you don't ask the question, you'll get a very vague response thanking you for your input, but giving you no real information.

DO send thank you letters when your legislator votes as you have requested, or helps you in some way.

DON'T use form letters. Always write or type in your own words on your own paper.

DON'T use petitions. Legislators know almost anyone will sign a petition, but hardly anyone cares enough to take the time to write a letter. One personal letter has much more impact than 100 names on a petition.

HOW TO: WRITE YOUR LEGISLATOR: PART II

Hints for Writing Your Legislator

A face to face visit may be the most effective way of contacting your legislator. When this is not possible a personal letter may be the next best choice, giving tangible evidence of your concerns.

The easier your position can be explained, the more likely it is that a legislator will be persuaded to accept it. Boil down the issue to the simplest, most essential facts and arguments. *How is it affecting your family to be on a waiting list for services? What specific program would help you with your needs?*

Example Letter:

Your Name
Address

Date

The Honorable _____
PO Box _____
Madison WI 53708

Dear Senator/Representative _____,

1. Say why you are writing
2. Say something about the current situation
3. Identify yourself
4. Add a personal touch - your story here!
5. An optional closing, re-stating your position

Sincerely,

Your Name _____

IF ALL ELSE FAILS:

While letters have the most visual impact other than meeting your legislator face to face, a phone call or e-mail is better than no contact at all!