



How to Write Your Legislators

A GUIDE FOR GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY

Writing a letter or sending an e-mail is the most common means of communicating with members of Congress. A well-written letter can influence a representative's decision-making, and a significant volume of letters on a particular issue will secure the attention of your legislators and their staff.

Communicating in writing with your elected officials allows you to express an opinion concerning an issue and urge the member to support your views. Letters can also communicate your satisfaction or disapproval with a vote that has recently been cast. Whatever your intent, you should consider the dos and don'ts on this page when writing a letter.

Dos

- Identify yourself. A letter will be given serious consideration if you are a constituent within the representative's district.
- Address the letter correctly. Use the following format to address the letter or email to a Senator or Representative, as applicable:

The Honorable <i>[full name]</i> United States Senate <i>[Room number and building name]</i> Washington, D.C. 20510	The Honorable <i>[full name]</i> United States House of Representatives <i>[Room number and building name]</i> Washington, D.C. 20515
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- Open your letter with the phrase "Dear Senator [last name]". Letters to representatives in the House should be addressed to same way, but open with the phrase "Dear Representative [last name]".
- Be specific. Clearly illustrate your support or opposition for a particular issue or pending bill.
- Illustrate your position with local examples. Legislators and staff appreciate how legislation affects local constituents; include personal stories and original thoughts.
- Offer your expertise. Highlight your experience or community involvement.
- Visit the MGMA Government Affairs' advocacy [webpage](#) to discover tools. The [Washington Connection](#) newsletter provides bulletins on current issues impacting medical group practices. Our advocacy statements and letters archive can provide you with information regarding our position on key policy issues and help you organize your message. Feel free to use these resources directly or pull quotations from them to incorporate into your message.

Don'ts

- Don't be argumentative or confrontational.
- Don't misrepresent your position - decisions should be based on sound data and accurate facts.
- Out of respect for the congressperson's busy schedule, keep your message to one page and offer to provide additional information upon request.