

Writing 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.

Writing an effective letter

Keep it brief — Keep letters to one page. Try to discuss only one bill or issue in a 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 Assembly Bill _____, 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.

Address your letter correctly — See the details on addressing your letter below.

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.

Addressing written correspondence

Nevada State Senators

Senator (full name)
401 South Carson Street
Carson City, NV 89701

Email address=(first initial)+(last name)@sen.state.nv.us
I.e. Mark Amodei is mamodei@sen.state.nv.us

Dear Senator (last name),

Nevada State Assemblymen or Assemblywomen

Assemblyman/Assemblywoman (full name)
401 South Carson Street
Carson City, NV 89701

Email address=(first initial)+(last name)@asm.state.nv.us
I.e. Bonnie Parnell is bparnell@asm.state.nv.us

Dear Assemblyman/Assemblywoman (last name),