














How to Write Your State Legislator

-  **Power of a letter** – Letters from home have become a legislator’s primary form of contact with the voters back home – and, as a result, the main source for assessing the views of his or her constituency. Your letter can and should be part of that input.
-  **Do not hesitate to write your legislator** if you have something to say that you think should be called to his/her attention.
-  **Every legislator is sensitive to grass-roots opinion.** He/She keeps in touch as closely as possible with voters in his/her district. Letters from constituents, which arrive every day at his/her home or in Springfield, are one of the best indications of what those constituents are thinking about.
-  **State your position** – Explain how a bill would affect you, your family, your business, or even your state or community.
-  **Thoughtful, sincere letters** on issues that directly affect the writer get the most attention. Such letters are often quoted in committee hearings or in debate.
-  **Be brief and to the point;** discuss only one issue in each letter; identify a bill by number and title if possible.
-  **Use facts** – Arguments that cannot be substantiated are dismissed. Be sure of your facts, but do not overload the letter with them. Facts tend to validate your letter and illustrate that you have given a lot of thought to your position.
-  **Use your own words** and your own stationery. If you are writing as the representative of a group, use the organization’s stationery.
-  **Be reasonable** – Do not ask for the impossible. Don’t tell a legislator to vote your way “or else.” Do be firm, confident and positive about your position.
-  **Use human terms** – Make it your own letter: write in your own style. Avoid using insurance industry jargon.
-  **Keep it short** – Write your letter about one issue. If you are concerned about three issues, write three letters. This makes your letter easier to read and your position easier to understand.

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Ask for a reply – Indicate to your legislator that you would appreciate a reply containing his/her position on the issue. As a constituent, you have a right to know how your representative feels on an issue.



Do write when your legislator does something of which you approve. Legislators hear mostly from constituents who are against something; this gives them a one-sided picture of their constituency. A note of appreciation will make your legislator remember you favorably next time you write.



Do write early in the session before a bill has been introduced if you have some ideas that you would like to see included in legislation. If you are “lobbying” for or against a bill and your legislator is a member of the Committee to which it has been referred, write when the Committee begins hearings. If your legislator is not a member of the Committee handling the bill, write him just before the bill is to come to the floor for debate and vote.



Do write the Chairman or members of a Committee holding hearings on legislation in which you are interested if you want to. However, remember that you have more influence with legislators from your own district than with any others.



Do write the Governor after the bill is passed – Indicate to your legislator that you would appreciate a reply containing his/her position on the issue.