Tips for Writing Congress

A Well -Written Letter Has Impact!

Sending the same "cookie-cutter" message to every member of Congress may grab attention but rarely warrant much consideration.

People who think members of Congress pay little or no attention to constituent mail are plain wrong. Concise, well thought out personal letters are one of the most effective ways Americans have of influencing lawmakers. But, members of Congress get hundreds of letters and emails every day, so a personal letter that is clear and concise is what will be read.

Keep it Simple

Your letter should address a single topic or issue. Typed, **one-page** letters are best.

- ✓ Say why you are writing and who you are. List your credentials. (If you want a response, you must include your name and address, even when using email.)
- ✓ Incorporate relevant details. **Be factual, not emotional.** Provide specific rather than general information about how the topic affects you and others. If a certain bill is involved, cite the correct title or number whenever possible.
    - ▪ How hepatitis affects you.
    - ▪ Any unique piece from your story (being diagnosed at time of cirrhosis/HCC, Vet, former IDU, boomer, etc.).
    - ▪ How does your story somehow relate to the person you are writing (are they a boomer or a vet)?
- ✓ Close by requesting the action you want taken: a vote for or against a specific bill, or change in general policy.

Addressing Members of Congress

To Your Senator:
The Honorable (full name)
(Room #) (Name) Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

To Your Representative:
The Honorable (full name)
(Room #) (Name) House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

Identifying Legislation

Cite these legislation identifiers when writing to members of Congress:

House Bills: "H.R._____"
House Resolutions: "H.RES._____"
House Joint Resolutions: "H.J.RES._____"
Senate Bills: "S._____"
Senate Resolutions: "S.RES._____"
Senate Joint Resolutions: "S.J.RES._____"

The above addresses should be used in email messages as well as those sent through the postal service. Find their addresses and email at congress.gov. Email is preferred.

ALWAYS

- Be courteous and respectful without "gushing" .
- Clearly and simply state the purpose of your letter. If it's about a certain bill, identify it correctly. If you need help in finding the number of a bill, use Congress.gov.
- Say who you are. Anonymous letters go nowhere. Even in email, include your full name, address, phone number, and email address. If you don't include at least your name and address, you will not get a response.
- State any professional credentials or personal experience you have, especially those pertaining to the subject of your letter.
- Keep your letter short – one page is best.
- Use specific examples or evidence to support your position.
- State what you want done or recommend a course of action.
- Thank the member for taking the time to read your letter.

NEVER

- Use vulgarity, profanity, or threats. The first two are just plain rude and the third one can result in a visit from the Secret Service. Simply stated, don't let your passion get in the way of making your point.
- Fail to include your name and address, even in email letters.
- Demand a response.

The best letters are courteous, to the point, and include specific supporting examples.

Caring Ambassadors