

Writing a Letter to your Legislators Tips Sheet

Writing to your legislators is a great way to communicate your views with him or her. Some ask which is better, a letter or an email? If you have time, a letter will probably get the most attention but a personal email can also be effective. The key to having an impact is to make it personal, concise, and well thought out. If you don't have time to write a personalized letter or email, consider calling your legislators instead. Here are some tips on how to write an effective letter or email.

Keep it Local. Write the legislators that represent you or with whom you have a personal relationship. They really care about what potential voters think so let them know that you are from their district. [Click here](#) to find your legislators.

Make it Personal. Try not to use a cookie-cutter email or letter. Your impact is going to be greater if your message is distinctly yours.

Keep it Simple and Snort. Address only one topic in your letter and limit your letter to one or two pages.

Use the Appropriate Address and Salutation. Use the correct title, address, and salutation, and remember to use spell check after completing your letter.

Follow this structure. Why are you writing? Who are you and what are your "credentials". Be sure and provide them with your contact information so they can contact you if needed. When possible and appropriate, provide more detail about your issue. Include one or two stories or pieces of data that support your issue and highlight your message. Be sure and let the legislator know how this issue affects you and your community. Close by requesting action. Let them know specifically what you want them to do. You aren't writing just to inform them. You need their help. Let them know exactly what action you want them to take. [Click here](#) to learn more about the CBF's priority federal, state, and local issues and advocacy efforts.

Also Send the Letter via Email or Fax. If you are sending a legislator a letter (instead of an email) be sure to also send the letter via email and fax. Due to security measures, letters can be delayed.

Sample Letter

The Honorable John Smith
Illinois House of Representatives
Stratton Office Building
Springfield, IL 62706

Dear Representative Smith:

(State who you are, your "credentials", and your purpose for writing in the first paragraph)

I am a student at Roosevelt High School in Chicago's Uptown neighborhood. I am writing to ask you

Acknowledgment: Information in this tips sheet came from the Texas Compute Education Association, the National Association of Social Workers, and Heartland Alliance.

to support funding for school-based health centers.

(Tell your legislator why you are concerned and include research when possible and appropriate)
In my community, many children and families do not receive regular medical care. Many people do not have health insurance and it is difficult and expensive to see a doctor or dentist.

The health center at Roosevelt High School provides emergency and routine medical and dental care, including school immunizations and physicals, at no cost to the students. This is very important for the many students who otherwise do not regularly visit doctors and dentists. In addition, health centers in schools are very convenient for both students and parents.

(Repeat your request and thank the legislator)

Students depend on health centers in their schools to receive high-quality medical care. Funding is needed to expand health centers and allow more students across Illinois access to medical and dental care directly in their school buildings.

Thank you for your time, and please feel free to contact me if I can provide additional information.

Sincerely,

Jane Participant
773-000-0000