

# Tips on Contacting Your Elected Officials

Your elected officials need to hear from you. Whether it is a formal letter, a quick postcard, an email, or Facebook post policymakers depend on receiving information and guidance from their constituents and other citizens when deciding how to vote on important issues.

**Keep it brief: The most powerful letters are sincere and written from your personal perspective and in your own words.** Generally a few sentences or brief paragraphs are the most appreciated. Communications should be limited to one issue. Staff and policymakers read many communications on many issues in any given day so your letter should be short and to the point.


**State Who You Are and What You Want Up Front:** In the first sentence tell your elected official that you are a constituent. Identify your name and address. You should also clearly identify the issue about which you are writing. If your letters pertains to a specific piece of legislation, it helps to identify it by its bill number (LB \_\_\_\_ ) or simply state the issue in general terms.

Example: Dear Senator, My name is Jane Smith and I live in your district at 111 Anyplace Lane in Nebraska. I am writing to you about LB 5 to make our employment practices more fair. I urge you to support these values and this important bill.

**Hit your three most important points:** Choose the three strongest points that will be most effective in persuading policy makers to support your position and flesh them out.

Ex. I encourage you to support this bill because it impacts me and my family, it is important to our economy, and fairness is a value we all hold dear.

**Personalize your letter:** Tell your elected official why this legislation matters to you, your family and your community. Feel free to briefly share your personal story. Policymakers use these stories in debate and in making up their mind about how to vote. This is about educating your elected officials to see things from your point of view.



**Personalize your relationship:** Have you ever voted for this elected official? Have you ever contributed time or money to his or her campaign? Are you familiar with her through any business or personal relationship? If so, tell them. However, you don't have to be a big donor to make a big difference. In fact, sincere personal stories are always the most powerful.

**You are the Expert:** Always be courteous and to the point. Don't be afraid to take a firm position. Remember policymakers are learning on the job too—you have a valuable experience and expertise that helps them learn and cast their vote wisely. Don't use all caps and don't use profanity under any circumstances.