

How To Write Your Senator Or Representative

By John Yeats

Writing to a legislator is not a difficult task and it is often vitally important. Form letters are usually trashed, but your personal letter has a significant amount of influence. Many legislators will tell you that as few as 20 letters on a subject are often enough to influence their position on a bill. As few as 20% of the American citizenry has ever written their legislator, consequently legislators are convinced that your letter represents 100 other people. For every one letter written, at least 100 voters share your perspective, but did not take the time to write.

Never send anonymous letters or e-mail. These will go unread. It is important that you sign your letter and make certain that your mailing address and phone number are on the letter.

Consider following the following guidelines:

1. **Begin with prayer.** Use I Timothy 2:1-6 as a guide and pray for the legislator and his family. Ask the Father to give you wisdom as you articulate your concern.
2. **Use the correct address.** When writing one of the members of the Oklahoma House of Representative or the Oklahoma Senate use the following form of address:

The Honorable (full name)
(Room number), State Capitol Building
2300 N. Lincoln Boulevard
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

Dear Senator (or Representative) _____ (last name) _____

To write the Oklahoma Governor
Governor Brad Henry
Room 212, State Capitol Building
2300 N. Lincoln Boulevard
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

3. **Identify yourself as a concerned citizen and church member.** Of course by identifying yourself as such you will want to make certain your letter is reflective of your identity.
4. **Be brief.** One page is enough.
5. **Be respectful and courteous.** Refuse to “talk down” to the legislator. Avoid condemning statements and accusatory language. Never use offensive language. Don’t quote scripture. Many public officials despise people who quote scripture.
6. **State your opposition or support about one issue at a time.** If you have the bill number that helps the legislator know specifically what issue is of concern to you. State one or two reasons for your support or opposition to a bill.
7. **Be informed.** Use the newspaper or other information sources to determine your facts. You may want to include clippings from a print media source. Use your letter to educate your legislator.
8. **Be timely.** The best time to write a letter is when you learn of a bill’s consideration. If you wait too long, the bill may already be acted on and moved forward in the process.
9. **Don’t hand write.** Never assume everyone can read your writing. Typed copy is best. Personal or business printed stationery is good but not necessary. If you do use business or organizational stationery, be sure you have permission to do so.
10. **Be brief.** This bears repeating because a long letter is usually skimmed instead of read.
11. **Be personal.** Explain how this issue affects you, your family and your community.
12. **Thank your legislator** for his/her service and assure him/her of your continued prayer support.

Remember: As long as you are courteous and honest, you cannot make a mistake by writing a letter to your elected public officials.

If you don't know who your representatives are: www5.lsb.state.ok.us/legislators/lbaddress.asp