

How to Write to a Legislator

Addresses

If you don't know who your legislators are, call the reference desk of your public library. Or, if you live in the United States, first find out your nine-digit ZIP code (to do so, call your post office). Once you have it, you can visit the Congressional website at <http://congress.org> and use the "Find Your Reps" service. You don't need to find an address for US legislators. All Legislators can simply be reached at the House or Senate addresses listed below.

Letter Basics

Letters to Legislators ideally should resemble business correspondence. Your name and address can appear either centered at the top of the page or directly underneath your signature. You can also include your phone number as part of your address. The address of the recipient appears on the left, above your salutation.

- If you wish to be perfectly correct, **The Honorable** should appear as the top line in the legislator's address. Their first and last names then stand alone on the next line.
- If you're writing to a **Representative**, your third and fourth lines will then be:
United States House of Representatives Washington, D.C. 20515.
- For a **Senator**, use this address:
United States Senate Washington, D. C. 20510.
- You'll begin, of course, with **a greeting**. If you're writing a Representative, address him or her as Mr. or Ms. Are you writing a Senator? Begin with "Dear Senator," followed by their surname.
- **Explain in your very first sentence** what your concern is. If you're writing about a specific bill, refer to it by name or number (e.g., House Bill _____), if you know it. Be sure to address only one concern in a given letter. You can always write again next week on a different matter.
- Then argue your point. Your Legislator will be especially interested in learning about your community and how the proposed legislation will affect it. **Be as specific as possible**, and provide examples that support your assertions.

Follow Up Your Letter

You can call the House of Representatives' switchboard at (202) 225-3121. The Senate's main number is (202) 224-3121. Ask the operator who answers for the office of your Legislator. Of course, it's extremely unlikely that you will get to speak to your Legislator directly. However, the staff member you speak to should take notes as to your position and convey your message.

Source: Learn2.com, Inc., <http://www.learn2learn.com>