



Writing to Your Member of Congress

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AALL Government Relations Office

You can write to your member of Congress by post, email, and fax. Though written communication is not recommended for urgent issues, letters can be an effective way of getting your point across to your member. In general, faxing and emailing are the most efficient means of written communication. Since the Anthrax attacks in 2001, written letters to Congress must go through a screening process, causing major delays in getting your letters to Capitol Hill. If you choose to send an e-mail to your Representative, the rules of the House dictate that a response will be sent through the mail, while Senators respond to email with email. Faxing is also suggested when the matter is time-sensitive. Follow these guidelines to establish a working relationship with the elected via correspondence— you might be sending and receiving emails on a regular basis!

Identify Yourself

Remember: as the person responsible for electing your member of Congress, you hold power. Start each communication with your name and address so as to identify yourself as a consistent. In the text of the letter, explain your job as a law librarian and how the issue you are writing about affects you. If you want a response, you must include your name and address, even when using email.

Properly Addressing Your Member of Congress

When writing a member of Congress it's important to use the proper salutation. Senators should be addressed as "Dear Senator [Last name]." Members of the House of Representatives should be addressed with "Dear Representative [Last name]." When writing to the Chair of a Committee or the Speaker of the House, it is proper to address them as "Dear Mr. Chairman" or "Dear Madam Speaker," etc. The address line in your letter should be formatted as such:

For Senators:

The Honorable [Full Name]
[Room #] [Name of] Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

For Representatives:

The Honorable [Full Name]
[Room #] [Name of] House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Keep it Simple

Your letter should address only one issue and should identify the subject in the first paragraph. Articulate your support or opposition to the issue, explain how it would affect you, and ask your member to take a specific action or stance. If you are writing in reference to a particular bill, refer to that measure's House or Senate bill number and title. The most effective letters are no longer than one page in length.

Don't send form letters— they are often ignored. See AALL's [Legislative Action Center](#) for sample letters to get you started, but consider adding personal experiences to make your letter much more effective.

Additional Resources

- [Find Your Elected Officials](#)
- [U.S. Senate](#)
- [U.S. House](#)
- [Congressional Staff and Titles](#)