WRITING TO ELECTED OFFICIALS

Public officials expect to receive mail from constituents. In many ways, they rely on input from the public to do their jobs. Letters are one of the best ways to communicate your message.

- You don’t have to be an expert, just explain your point of view.
- Be brief. You don’t get extra points for more words or extra statistics. Try to keep it to one page.
- Be polite, respectful and reasonable.
- Use your own words – do not pull out a thesaurus.
- Personal stories and observations are the most persuasive
- Be clear -- avoid jargon and technical language.
- Be specific about your concern and what you want the official to do about it.
- It is best to address only one issue in a letter.
- If you are a constituent, say so in the first paragraph.
- Call the official’s office or visit their website to get correct addresses, titles and spelling. For example -- who should be addressed “The Honorable” and who shouldn’t.
- Be sure your letter is legible. It doesn’t have to be typed, but it should be easy to read.
- Ask for a response.
- Include your name, address, phone number and other contact information on the letter. Don’t rely on your return address -- envelopes often get separated from letters.
- Triple check your work. Have a friendly “editor” look it over before you send it.
- If you don’t hear from them after a week or two, call to be sure the official got your letter. Ask again for a response.