

TIPS FOR WRITING TO YOUR STATE LEGISLATORS

The actions of state government should be based on the wishes and concerns of its citizens. Unfortunately, many people never communicate with their elected officials. Your state representative and senator need to hear from you. It is important that he or she understands your concerns, knows whether you support or oppose a bill, and answers your questions about legislative proposals before the Assembly or Senate.

Don't hesitate to phone, write letters or e-mail, or arrange face-to-face meetings with your legislator to discuss your views on issues that affect you, your family, and your community.

Because lawmakers often rely on letters from constituents to gauge public opinion in their districts, here are some things to remember:

- Contact your own legislator as well as the chairperson and members of the appropriate committee. It is important that committee members receive your opinion while they are holding hearings on legislation in which you are interested.
- Put your return address on the letter. The envelope sometimes gets thrown away before the letter is answered. If you are e-mailing a message, include your full name and address.
- Identify your subject clearly. If you are writing about a specific piece of legislation, provide the name or number of the bill, if possible.
- State your reasons clearly. Your own personal experience is the best supporting evidence. Explain how the issue affects you, your family, or your community. Be specific and brief; one page is best. Clearly state whether you are for or against the bill or resolution. Support your position with reliable facts and figures.
- Write your letter in your own words. Avoid "form" letters that identify your message as part of an organized pressure campaign. A sincere, heartfelt letter expressing your concerns is much more influential.
- Be reasonable. Don't ask for the impossible or engage in threats. Courtesy is always appropriate. If you disagree, do so without being argumentative.
- Time the arrival of your contact. Your phone call, letter or e-mail should reach your legislator BEFORE legislation is acted upon in a committee or on the Assembly floor. Usually it is best to offer comments on legislation while it is still in committee.
- Ask your legislator for his or her position in a response. As a constituent, you are entitled to know. Thank your legislator if he or she has done something you think is right on a particular issue. Everyone likes a pat on the back, and it will be remembered.

CORRESPONDENCE CAN BE SENT TO STATE SENATORS AT THE FOLLOWING ADDRESS:

P.O. Box 7882, Madison, WI 53707-7882

CORRESPONDENCE CAN BE SENT TO STATE REPRESENTATIVES AT THE FOLLOWING ADDRESSES:

Members' last names beginning with A-L = P.O. Box 8952, Madison, WI 53708

Members' last names beginning with M-Z = P.O. Box 8953, Madison, WI 53708

Go to <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/waml/> to find the name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address of your state representative and state senator.