

REAL PEOPLE. REAL LIVES.

HOW TO WRITE A LETTER TO A LEGISLATOR

(From InterHab's Grassroots Legislative Activities Manual, October, 1997.)

1. Be as concise as possible in presenting your case. Keep your letter to a single page. Let the legislator know who you represent, what you want to talk about, what your position is and what you want done. If you are lobbying about a specific bill, refer to it by number.
2. Be both as specific and as practical as possible. Let the legislator know how the issue relates to his or her constituents or committee responsibilities. An example of how the legislation would affect you personally can be particularly persuasive. You may also want to make the legislator aware of opposing viewpoints and any political liabilities likely to occur if he or she supports your position at the outset, rather than have the legislator realize them later and feel he or she was only told part of the story.
3. Let the legislator know how you or your organization can be helpful. What resources can you offer in working for passage of the bill you want your legislator to support?
4. Do not threaten. Suggestions of political retaliation are counter-productive to the need of maintaining ongoing communication with legislators.
5. Handwritten or typed letters on personal stationery in your own words are most effective. Form letters are generally ignored or discounted by legislators.
6. Indicate where you can be reached. Be sure your letter includes a mailing address, e-mail address if available, and a phone number.
7. Follow-up to acknowledge support. When your legislator has supported your position, be sure to recognize their help with a thank you note.
8. Use proper written etiquette. Address legislators as follows:

*Honorable John Smith
Kansas State House
Topeka, KS*

Dear Representative Smith:

*Honorable Jane Jones
or Russell Office Building
Washington D.C.*

Dear Senator Jones: