

## How to Write to Elected Officials

Making contact with your elected officials is a great way to advocate for your cause. Elected officials can do a lot to help or hurt support and funding for libraries of all types. Writing a letter is a good way to get your message across to them but there are some important tips to keep in mind when writing your letter:

- Make sure you have the correct contact information for the official you have chosen to contact. Follow [this link](#) to find the correct contact information for elected officials from the President down to your local government officials.
- Open your letter in an official manner. Use the following format:

*Date*

*Your name*

*Your Address*

*[Drop down Two lines]*

*Title and name of official*

*Body of office (i.e. NC House, NC Senate, U.S. House of representatives, U.S. Senate)*

*Office address*

*[drop down two lines]*

*Dear (Title) (Name),*

*Body of Letter*

- Explain the purpose for your letter. Let the reader know immediately what the letter is about. Tell him/her why you are concerned or pleased that a particular decision is being considered. Include any legislation identifiers if possible, such as bill number, title of bill, page number. As much as you can provide so that the member can understand what piece of legislation you are referring to.

**Example:** *The proposed increase in the gasoline tax as part of H.R. 1 Transportation, Railroad And Infrastructure Nationalization Act of 2021 (TRAIN Act) will make the cost of transportation unreasonably high for commuters in the metropolitan area.*

- Summarize your understanding of the issue/decision being considered. State the general impact that you expect to occur if a particular decision is made.

**Example:** *The creation of a peer-counseling program at our high school will help reduce the number of teen pregnancies in our community.*

- Explain your position on this issue. Describe in detail why you feel the decision made will lead to the impact you foresee.

**Example:** *This will provide opportunities for our high school students to discuss pressures they experience with their peers at this critical time in their lives.*

- Describe what any changes will mean to you and to others. Describe specifically the positive or negative effects the decision will have on you personally and on those you represent. The more people affected by the decision, the more convincing you may be.

**Example:** *This program will help provide career opportunities for teenagers in our community. Over 10,000 teenagers would be eligible to participate under the proposed legislation*

- Identify others who may be affected by this decision. Tell the official which, and how many, people will be affected Statistics can be very helpful here.

**Example:** *A recent study showed that 80% of minors who smoke obtain cigarettes at stores that do not ask for identification. Increased enforcement of the existing laws prohibiting tobacco sales to minors could significantly reduce the rate of smoking among our youth.*

- Acknowledge past support. Mention appropriate actions and decisions the official has made in the past and express thanks for them.

**Example:** *We appreciate your past support of the bill (give bill number/name if possible) protecting the rights of emergency medical crews to not be tested for HIV.*

- Describe what action you hope the official will take. State specifically what action you (and those you represent) hope the official will take, and by what date if there is a deadline.

**Example:** *We hope you realize the best course of action to protect our community's infants and young children is to vote "yes" to House Bill #689b.*

- If you have written a letter that opposes some action, offer an alternative if possible.

**Example:** *I believe that rather than increasing the number of police cars patrolling our neighborhood, a cheaper and more effective alternative would be to work with our community to develop a community-policing program.*

- If you have time and you are committed, ask how you can help.  
**Example:** *Our group is more than willing to explore the various options in helping make our community a safer place to live.*
- Close and sign your letter. Thank the official and sign your full name. make sure your address and phone number are included.
- Proofread your letter for errors. Your letter will not look professional if there are spelling errors and typos in it.

**Never:** Demand a response, sound indignant, use profanity, or forget to include your name and address (even in an email).

#### References:

Nagy, Jenette. "Section 1. Writing Letters to Elected Officials." *Chapter 33. Conducting a Direct Action Campaign | Section 1. Writing Letters to Elected Officials | Main Section | Community Tool Box*, 2019, [ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/advocacy/direct-action/letters-to-elected-officials/main](http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/advocacy/direct-action/letters-to-elected-officials/main).