

## Communicating with Congress or Your Legislator

Heightened security measures have dramatically increased the time it takes for a letter sent by post to reach the offices of federal or state legislators. More and more, citizens are using emails and faxes to communicate their concerns and increasingly elected officials' offices prefer electronic communications for constituent contact. As a general rule, Members of Congress are far more likely to heed your message if you are one of their constituents. The following tips aim to improve the effectiveness of your correspondence, regardless of the means you choose to deliver your message.

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### Tips for Writing Congress

State your purpose for writing in the first sentence of the letter. For example: As your constituent, I am writing to urge your support for increased funding for health care.

If your letter pertains to a specific piece of legislation, identify it. And make sure that you are referencing the correct legislation to the correct body of Congress. House bills are H.R.\_\_\_\_; Senate bills are designated as S.\_\_\_\_. It is also important to know the status of the bill.

Be courteous.

If appropriate, include personal information about why the issue matters to you to make your point.

Address only one issue in each email.

Close your letter with a restatement of your purpose and indicate the response that you expect.

Note: 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 Madam Chairwoman:, or Dear Mr. Speaker:

### Tips For Phoning Congress

Telephone calls are usually taken by a staff member, not the member of Congress. Ask to speak with the aide who handles the issue about which you wish to comment.

After identifying yourself as a constituent, tell the aide you would like to leave a brief message, such as: "Please tell Senator/Representative [Name] that I support/oppose [S.\_\_\_\_/H.R.\_\_\_\_]."

State your reasons for your support or opposition to the bill. Ask for your senators' or representative's position on the bill. You may also request a written response to your telephone call.

For more on Congress and the State Legislature, including addresses, backgrounds, e-mail forms etc., go to the KFB website at [www.kfb.org](http://www.kfb.org) and click on the **CapWiz Legislative Action Center**.



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