

ADVOCACY BY LETTER

Letters are an important, even critical, way to influence legislation. Letters to the writer's own Senator and Representative are especially important.

- TAKE THE TIME TO QUICKLY CRAFT A KEY MESSAGE - it doesn't have to be perfect (perfect is the enemy of good!) or entirely original; expanding on a message from a group's action alert is fine, but personalizing that message is important.
- Write in your own words and include your own thoughts: tell how the legislation will affect you and others like you.
- Show as much knowledge as you can, but don't worry if you're not an expert: Your personal experience is the best testimony that you can offer.
- Avoid sending form letters, but if you do send one, be sure to personalize it with a handwritten note.
- Don't threaten, browbeat, or get nasty.
- Write briefly, on one subject at a time, and refer to bills by name and number.
- Don't try to become a pen pal; if you write too often you become a nuisance.
- If you ask a question and don't get a reply, follow up with another letter asking politely, but clearly for a response.
- When a legislator votes as you asked, send a thank-you note.

In short, an effective letter to deliver your key message includes:

- Who you are (**I am a voter in your district, and I belong to the 350-member Association of Pizza-Eating Voters....**)
- Your brief description of the bill (your issue) and what it will do (**We are writing to ask your support of House Bill 1234 when it comes before your Committee. This bill would require all public feeding programs -- e.g., school lunch, senior citizen -- to serve pizza three times a week.**)
- Why you care (**My child frequently skips what's offered for lunch at his school, but he always eats pizza. The more pizza offered, the more I can be confident that he will eat.**)
- Why they should care (**Pizza can be an appealing and cost-effective way to meet the nutrition needs of children and seniors in our district.**)
- Who else supports it (**This bill is supported by a broad coalition of pizza makers, tomato growers, sausage producers, and the local Weight Watchers....**)
- What you want done again, in slightly different words (**Please make this possible, by voting for HB 1234 in Committee and again later on the House Floor....**)
- Your name, address, and telephone number (**Please feel free to contact us; we would be happy to answer any questions or be of other assistance to you in this matter.**)