

Effective Letters to Your Legislators Can Influence Public Policy

When	Whom to Contact
Early in a legislative session to alert them to a concern or to ask that a bill be brought to a hearing	+ Your senators and representatives + Members of committees and subcommittees that handle the issues
When a bill is being debated in committee or on the floor	+ Your senators and representatives + Members of committees and subcommittees that handle the issues
After a bill has been passed in the House or the Senate	+ The Governor
Anytime—to educate your legislator or elected official on an issue	+ Your senators and representatives + The Governor

Legislators value your opinions—you may even be quoted. As a constituent, your experiences and stories are more persuasive than the media, government information sources and lobbyists. Phrases, stories and statistics you provide may be used for hearings, meetings and speeches.

PERSUASIVE LETTERS

- concisely address a single issue (Avoid computer printout letters that take on the appearance of a form letter. **Never** send form letters.);
- are brief (under one page), dignified, sincere and respectful;
- identify you as a local resource (If you are in the legislator's district, be sure to mention that fact);
- explain your position;
- tell the member what you want him or her to do (i.e., co-sponsor a bill, ask for a bill to be brought to a hearing, vote for/against a specific bill);
- provide personal and specific examples of how the issue will affect people;
- ask specific questions (It is appropriate to ask how the member plans to vote. The more specific the question, the more thoughtful the response will be.);
- include supporting information as an attachment.

The Letter Route

- Your letters are forwarded to the legislative aide responsible for the issue.
- The aide assesses the persuasiveness of points made and summarizes the letter for the member.
- Depending upon the volume of mail, your letter may be very significant.
 - If volume has been small, the member may see the issue as unimportant to his or her district—or, your letter may change the perspective.

- If volume is heavy, your letter could challenge differing opinions expressed in other letters or help confirm opinions of those who share your views.
- The legislative aide prepares a response. In many cases this will be a standardized reply; however, if your letter was unique and asked very specific questions, you may receive an individualized letter.

Write again

- when you have additional information, such as a relevant newspaper article;
- to express appreciation for a member's support;
- when a response from the member was vague, or he or she misunderstood your message.

Addresses of State Officials

Governor

The Honorable Rick Perry
 Governor of Texas
 Office of the Governor
 P.O. Box 12428
 Austin, TX 78711-2428

Email: <http://www.governor.state.tx.us/contact>
 Phone: 800-843-5789 (citizen's assistance hotline)
 800-252-9600 (citizen's opinion hotline)
 512-463-1782 (Austin hotline)
 512-463-2000 (switchboard—7 AM-6 PM)
 Fax: 512-463-1849

State Senator

The Honorable (full name)
 Texas State Senate
 P.O. Box 12068, Capitol Station
 Austin, TX 78711

State Representative

The Honorable (full name)
 Texas House of Representatives
 P.O. Box 2910
 Austin, TX 78768

Don't know who represents you?

Go to:

www.capitol.state.tx.us

click on:

Who represents me?

Fill in your address and you will learn the names of your Senator and Representative.

Website for information on Texas government officials & legislators at Texas Legislature

Online: www.capitol.state.tx.us

For information and resources to help you, contact:

Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty
 2709 S Lamar Blvd, Ste 109
 Austin, TX 78704

Phone: (512) 441-1808
email: info@tcadp.org
www.tcadp.org