

Citizenship in the Nation

Tips on Writing to Federal Officials

8. Name your two senators and the member of Congress from your congressional district. Write a letter about a national issue and send it to one of these elected officials, sharing your view with him or her. Show your letter and any response you receive to your counselor.

National Issues

- While the federal government is involved in a lot more things than originally envisioned in our Constitution, there are a lot of things your federal representative does not have direct influence over.
- Influencing government decisions means understanding what element of government – local, state, or federal – is most directly involved in the issue you care about.
- What is the national issue that concerns you? How do you know it is a national issue?

Why Write?

- To express your views on an issue and persuade your elected representative to support your view, and ask what their position is.
- To share a unique perspective or experience.
- To ask for help with a federal agency.
- To ask questions or get information about legislation on an issue important to you.

Courtesies

- Be polite and professional. Rudeness is not very persuasive.
- Don't threaten, or demand an immediate commitment on a complicated issue.
- Understand that other constituents may disagree. Present your facts and reasoning as clearly and persuasively as you can.
- Be patient. Mail to DC is delayed by up to 10 days for security reasons. Then it has to be researched, an answer drafted, edited and approved.

Content

- Send a personal letter in your own words. Form letters are less effective.
- State your reason for writing in the first paragraph. Be specific.
- If you are writing about a particular bill, give the name of it or the bill number, e.g. H.R. 218 or S. 46, if you know it.
- Be constructive: suggest solutions if you have them.
- Share your expertise if you know about a particular issue or have had a particular experience that is important.