**How to Contact Your District Representative**

WHO DO I WRITE TO? Directions by Jeannette Carofano

1. On the Internet, go to <https://www.ncleg.gov/LegislativeCalendar>. On this page, you can check details of any bill.

2. At the top of the page, click *district representative.* In the drop-down box, click *find your legislator.*

3. On the next screen, leave blue button on *Congress.* On the right side, in the light blue box *enter address,* type your home, street and city address. Click. Your address will appear, as well as a map.

4. Just above the map, your district House and Senate representatives are listed. *Click on their name* for contact info.

5. In the Biography line at the top of the individual’s page, click *Introduced Bills*, and a list will appear. Choose a bill and read about it.

6. To search the other legislators, click your *back (left) arrow* in the top left corner of your screen. This will return you to the list of your representatives, and you can search again on another rep.

There are other options to explore, no more difficult than clicking on a search topic. There’s more there than you’ll ever want to know! This is a terrific resource site.

# Tips on How to Write to Your Legislator Combined from Multiple Internet Sources

***1. Write on only one issue per letter****.* Combining different issues and bills in one letter becomes confusing and diffuses your message. If you know the bill number, use it, and make certain it's accurate.

***2. Make sure it's neat.*** Type neatly, if you can. Proofread for errors and typos. Try to fit your message all on one page... it's easier to read.

***3. Use Proper Salutation.*** The salutation should be "Dear Representative Smith" or “Dear Senator Smith" or "Dear Assemblyman Smith" depending on the office held. The address should read: Honorable Jim Smith, Address, City, State, Zip. Address state government officials as you would a business communication, indicating the recipient's title (Jim Smith, Director, Department of Agriculture, Street Address, City, State, Zip).

### *4. State clearly your position on the issue.* Some persons/organizations choose to stamp "SUPPORT" or "OPPOSE" on the top of the letter next to the bill number or issue identification. This makes it easy for the legislator to see where his/her constituents stand.

### *5. Try to learn where your legislator stands before you write.* If you know they agree with your position, thank them and support them. If you know they are opposed to your position, offer them sound reasons to change their position.

### *6. Back up your position with facts.* Provide any background documentation you have to support your position, e.g. research articles, public opinion polls, newspaper clippings, etc. if you don't know the facts or can't produce them, don't guess.

### *7. State clearly your reason for writing.* If you want to learn your legislator's position on a particular bill, ask for it. If you want your legislator to vote for a bill in committee, say so. *8. Request a written response.* Ask specifically for a written response to the question(s) you have posed. *9. Never be abusive or threatening.*

### *10. Let your legislator know who you represent.* If you represent yourself - a constituent - fine. If you represent an organization, say so. Use your organization's official letterhead if they have one. Offer to speak with the legislator by providing a telephone number where you can be reached. If contacted by the policy maker or a staff member, be sure to make the time to talk or visit with that person.

### *11. Write again!* Especially if you receive no reply in a reasonable amount of time, write again. Write different letters on different issues. Be in continuous communication with your legislator. Encourage other constituents/ organizations who agree with your position to write the legislator with the same message.

**NCTE – National Council of Teaching English**

**Visiting Your Legislator at Home**

Take time to visit your Members of Congress while they're home in your district during scheduled recesses in the spring, around Memorial Day and Independence Day, and from early August until after Labor Day.  Legislators are eager to know what their constituents think, so as a constituent from an elected official's own district, you can have a significant impact on a given issue.

**Follow these steps to prepare for a successful visit.**

**Make an Appointment**

Visit the [Senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm) and [House.gov](http://www.house.gov/representatives/find/) websites.

* Call the office, either locally or in Washington, DC to schedule your appointment. If you plan to go with a group, limit your group to 3-5 individuals.
* Call the day before your visit to confirm your appointment.

**Do Your Research**

Visit the [Senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm) and [House.gov](http://www.house.gov/representatives/find/) websites to learn about your legislator before the visit.

**Gather Materials for Your Visit**

Use talking points from [NCTE's Education Policy Platform](http://www.ncte.org/positions/educpolicy) as an anchor for your discussion.

* Plan one or two points - no more than three - that you want to make.
* *Be sure to include your own story of what you know works or is needed on the issue you've chosen.*
* Bring 1) your business card and 2) a one-page paper outlining your talking points and 3) any background materials to leave behind.
* See [these tips](http://www.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Involved/Action/AdvocacyDay/2013TipsforVisitsonCapitolHill.docx) for visiting legislators' offices.

**Practice what you are going to say. If you are going in a group, break up your topics amongst each other.**

**During the Visit**

* Smile and engage in conversation. Be confident and relaxed.  After all, you are the expert.
* Be prepared that staff may ask you questions that you cannot answer. Be honest and tell them you don't know but that you will be happy to get back to them with the correct answer.

**After the Visit**

E-mail a thank you note after your visit and include any information you may have offered to provide during your visit.

Your objective is to develop a relationship with your legislator and with the staff responsible for education issues -- a relationship based on your expertise and knowledge of literacy education issues. Ask to be consulted on various issues. Stay in touch.

**Note:**  To request an appointment with your U.S. Representative and Senators, see our tips for [Visiting a Legislator in Washington, DC](http://www.ncte.org/action/reqappt).

**East Central Illinois Area on Aging** [**www.eciaaa.org**](http://www.eciaaa.org) **Tips on Writing to Your Legislators**

Legislators pay close attention to their mail since it gives them valuable information on constituent concerns. To communicate effectively with a legislator:

* Identify the subject of your letter by bill number or issue, as precisely as possible.
* Help inform the legislator about the problem by explaining the effect on the public the bill or action may have.
* State your position and clearly explain why you feel that way.
* Write or type your name, address, and phone number clearly so the legislator can respond to your letter.
* Letters explaining your own views are much more effective than postcards or form letters.

**Sample Letter**

Tips on Calling Your Legislators Legislators also pay close attention to phone calls from constituents because it tells them how their constituents feel about issues. If you decide to make a phone call:

* + - Say, "I am calling to urge [Senator Name] to [support or oppose] [Bill Number].
* The Secretary will probably ask your name and city of residence.

Your Street Address
Your City, State, Zip
Date

The Honorable Michael Smith
Illinois House of Representatives
E-1 Stratton Building
Springfield, IL 62706

Dear Representative Smith,

I am writing to urge your support for House Bill xxxx, sponsored by Representative Clayton.

I believe [insert your personal position or belief]. This bill will [tell how it will affect people with disabilities]. [Then tell how it will affect you personally.]

For these reasons, I urge you to [support or oppose] House Bill xxxx.

Thank you for your attention to this issue.

Sincerely,
Name

Home Phone
Work Phone