

Successful Advocacy Letters

Adapted from NC Center for Nonprofits

<https://ncnonprofits.org/public-policy-blog/writing-effective-notes-your-elected-officials>

1. ***What outcome do you want?*** Stating your mission or position from the start may help to introduce your organization to your audience.
2. ***Who holds the authority to make these things happen?*** In some cases, it's one individual; in many, it'll take many people reaching agreement. Asking yourself this question may help you to avoid expending energy on trying to persuade people who really don't have the authority to do what you want. Letters tend to go ignored if there is no authority to make change.
3. ***Of all these people, who does it make the most sense for YOU to ask for support?*** If you're engaging in legislative advocacy, most frequently you'll want to address your request to the people who ACTUALLY represent you. Just type in your address at the <https://www.congress.gov/members/find-your-member> to get your federal list. Make sure you establish yourself as a voting member of their specific constituency right from the start.
4. ***What do you know about what they care about? What do THEY want?*** No matter who you're approaching, an investment of five minutes on their websites and social media can reveal a lot about their values and priorities. Generally speaking, all policy makers care about how issues affect their own constituents and appreciate opportunities to demonstrate their values and commitment to the communities they serve. Additionally, both lawmakers and their aides typically welcome opportunities to learn more about issues from local experts and appreciate well-sourced data to help inform their decisions.
5. ***How can YOU help them get what they want?*** Can you give them an opportunity to demonstrate their values through their actions? Can you help them make evidence-based decisions? Will taking the action you request please voters in their district? It occasionally even helps to send letters to news agencies if your letters go unanswered. It is always polite to let a legislator know in advance if you plan to go this route.
6. ***What specific request do you want to make of them?*** Make sure to come right out and make a direct ask. Letters that do not mention action items will largely go unanswered! Make sure again to know what your legislator can actually control.
7. ***What details will matter the most to them?*** Share a compelling anecdote that will stick with them, present any relevant data in digestible ways, quantify (as best you can) how many of their constituents are connected to your organization, and remind them of any connections you've made in the past. If they're a vocal member of a sports fan-base, mention your connection. Any little bit of humanity helps!