

Write a Letter to Your Elected Official

Step up and take action! Writing a personal letter is a great way to communicate with your elected officials. Personalized letters are well-received by elected officials, as they know it takes time to write a letter with a well-thought out message. Use the following tips to help you write a compelling letter:

Before Writing the Letter

- **Find out who your elected officials are.** Visit <http://cga.ct.gov/asp/menu/cgafindleg.asp> and enter your address to find your Connecticut State Legislators. Use www.house.gov to determine who represents you in the U.S. House of Representatives. Visit www.senate.gov and select your state to identify your two U.S. Senators. On these websites, you will find links to your members of Congress' websites to obtain their contact information.
- **Gather appropriate information.** The official's website is a resource to learn where she/he stands on various issues. It is also important to gather local and state facts/information to illustrate the issue's impact on the area your elected official represents. If you have specific questions, email info@ctmagnetschools.org and we will help you obtain the information you need. If you cannot find this information, don't worry – you should still write the letter.

Writing the Letter

- **Keep it short.** Limit your letter to one page.
- **Identify yourself.** In the first paragraph of your letter immediately state who you are and the city/zip code that you live it. It is very important that your elected official know that you are their constituent.
- **Identify the issue.** Also, in the first paragraph clearly state the issue that your letter addresses. If your letter is referring to a specific bill, identify it by name and number if possible (i.e. H.B. 1234 or S.B. 1234 or P.A. 1234). Remember, it is okay if you cannot find it – still write the letter.
- **Focus on your main points.** Support the issue you are addressing with key statistics, compelling facts, and/or condensed background information. Keep your points concise and clearly focused on the issue. Try not to overload your letter with excess information – your message might get lost in the excessive content.
- **Personalize your letter.** Express appropriate conviction and emotion in your letter to add strength and to express sincerity of this issue to you. State why the issue is important to you and tell how the issue affects you, your family, your community, your state and/or your nation. Be specific, but concise.

* Adapted from The Children's Defense Fund at:

<http://www.childrensdefense.org/take-action/advocacy-that-works/write-a-letter.html>

- **Hold your elected official accountable.** Be specific about the action(s) you would like for your elected official to take on the issue (i.e. supporting certain legislation, not supporting certain legislation, etc.) and/or other ways your elected official can help with the issue (i.e. creating a program to address a need in the community, expanding services, etc.). Remind your elected official that you will follow his/her response to the issue and it will affect how you vote in future elections.
- **Ask for a reply.** Thank your elected official for reading the letter and ask for a reply with his/her position on the issue and how he/she will address the issue. Be sure to include your name and address on both your letter and envelope to ensure appropriate delivery of your elected official's response to you.

After Writing the Letter

- **Follow the issue.** Continue to follow the issue and how your elected official works to address the issue. As your elected official makes decisions on the issue, contact him/her to either say thank you for addressing the issue in a manner that you feel is appropriate or to express your disappointment in their response and your desire to see him/her address the issue differently.
- **Addressing the envelope.** If you are writing to a member of Congress, use the following template to address the envelope:

The Honorable Senator

Senate Clerk's Office
Connecticut General Assembly
210 Capitol Avenue, Room 305
Hartford, CT 06106-1591

The Honorable Representative

Office of the House Clerk
Connecticut General Assembly
State Capitol, Room 109
Hartford, CT 06106-1591

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