

Tips for Writing to Congress

Writing to your elected officials is an effective and important way to influence lawmakers on those issues that affect women and girls throughout the world. A thoughtful, well-written, concise letter will carry more weight than forwarding a mass e-mail or a form letter. These tips can help ensure your letter to Congress has impact.

1) Direct your letter to your elected Representative and Senators. Constituent letters have much more influence on lawmakers than letters from voters who are not from their districts or states. To find your Representative, go to www.house.gov and enter your zip code. To find your Senators, go to www.senate.gov and enter your state.

2) Keep your letter brief and focused.

- Ask for specific action.
 - If there is certain legislation pertinent to your concerns, ***be sure to reference the correct title or number of the bill.*** Ask your Representative or Senator to take action by voting for or against it.
 - If you need help in correctly identifying a bill, use the Thomas Legislative Information System at www.thomas.gov.
 - If there is not a particular bill you would like him/her to take action on, ask for a change in the general policy affecting your issue.
- Address only one issue in your letter.
- Keep the letter to one page.

3) Give reasons that support your recommended action. Provide specific information on how the issue affects you and others. State any professional credentials or personal experience you may have that pertain to the subject of your letter. Cite particular examples and evidence to support your position

4) Be courteous and respectful.

5) Write your name and address on the envelope (return address) and at the bottom of the letter. This ensures that your Representative or Senator knows that you live in their district.

6) Send your letter to Congress by e-mail, fax or mail. Because of security precautions, mail can often be slow in reaching congressional offices. Try e-mail or fax.

7) Follow up and engage your members of Congress in dialogue. If you get a response from your member of Congress, follow up with another letter. You can thank them if they signal their support for your proposed action. If they disagree with your proposed action, you can respond by reiterating your position and providing more evidence to support it.

8) Ask a friend, colleague and/or family member to write a letter as well. Members of Congress are more likely to act if they see momentum building around an issue or a bill.

