

Letter Writing Toolkit

Introduction to Letter Writing

Writing a letter or postcard to legislators and representatives can inform them of your position on a given issue. Sending many postcards or letter together or in the same short time period is most effective, and writing as a group therefore helps consolidate the impact of the letters.

Advantages

- Expresses one's opinion in a collected and thought out form.
- Does not require direct conversation.
- Can be timed to flood legislator offices.
- Can be used to connect legislators with other resources or organizations.

Limitations

- No immediate feedback from legislator.
- Must be sent at the right time.

Materials Needed

- Postcards or other stationary
- Pens and pencils
- Envelopes and postage
- Clear information about the issues

Elements of a Postcard or Letter

Introducing oneself: who you are, where you are from, what groups you are connected with.

Making a demand: Be specific with the issue you are concerned about; use house bill numbers if possible and state your desired outcome.

Encourage accountability: Ask the legislator to make their stance public, and try to follow up with phone calls or meetings if possible.

Including resources: You can direct legislators to important reports or other resources that are relevant to the issue if writing a letter.

Keeping it brief: Letters should be to the point and under a page long.

Addressing Correspondence:

For Members of the Minnesota House of Representatives

Honorable (Full Name)

Minnesota House of Representatives

(Room #) State Office Building

100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.

St. Paul, MN 55155-1298

Begin with: Dear Rep. (Last Name)

For Minnesota Senators:

Honorable (Full Name)

Minnesota State Senate

(Room #) Minnesota Senate Building

95 University Avenue West

St. Paul, MN 55155-1606

Begin with: Dear Sen. (Last Name)

Description of Materials

Postcard or other stationary: Decide whether your group will write postcards or letters. Post cards are better suited to convey an opinion on a soon to be voted on issue. Letters are better suited to explanation of concerns about an issue and the reasons the legislator should vote in the way you ask. Also think about who you are asking to write (i.e. children, adults, seniors) when deciding which method will best suit your writers.

Pens and pencils: Unless people are typing and printing their own letters, pens and pencils will be necessary to write the letters. Be considerate of people's handwriting and knowledge of English. It may be best to let people dictate letters and have a volunteer write it out.

Envelopes and Postage: Be well equipped with enough postage and envelopes to facilitate sending all of the letters and postcards written by members.

Emailing Letters: If people prefer to type their letters they can do so and email their legislators. If this is the approach your group takes, try to be as formal as possible in the email and include full address and zip code.

Clear information about issues: Information will always be available at jrlc.org, though if you do not see something that you are looking for, you can contact us at 612-230- 3200 or info@jrlc.org. Make extra information about the issues available for volunteers to share with others or to take home with them.