

## **How To Series: Writing To Congress – Elected Officials**

We have become so dependent on using convenient e-mail that we tend to no longer use other methods of communication.. With the rise in electronic communication, many special interest groups have used e-mail to bombard elected official with form bulk messages. As such, bulk or blast e-mails, generally have lost their effectiveness with elected officials.

A 2002 survey of Minnesota legislators stated e-mail is effective under certain circumstances. When an e-mail is personally written by a constituent, it can be as effective as sending a letter.

**How can we write an effective and powerful letter?** Letters and faxes are reported to be the most effective and persuasive way of communicating our views. One letter from a concerned constituent will carry more weight than hundreds of form e-mails. Hand written letters are so rare they are even more effective.

These helpful suggestions will help you write an effective and persuasive letter:

- **Keep your letter short.** Limit it to one page and only one issue.
- **Identify yourself and the issue.**  
In the first paragraph of your letter state who you are and what issue you are writing about. If you are referring to a specific bill, identify it by number (e.g. H.R.1234 or S. 1357) and the name of the bill.
- **Focus on your main points or concerns.**  
There may be many reasons you support, or oppose, saving the habitat of the Bald Eagle. Select no more than three of the strongest points and develop them clearly.
- **Make it personal.**  
Tell your legislator why the issue matters to you, your family, your community. Make a connection to the legislator. Did you attend his/her town meeting?
- **Ask for a reply.**  
Include your name and address on both your letter and envelope.
- **Trust yourself.**  
Be polite, courteous and confident in your understanding of the issue. It is very possible that the legislator may know less than you.

**Thank elected officials when they vote the way you requested.**

### **Addressing Correspondence:**

#### **To a Senator:**

The Honorable (Full Name)  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

#### **To a Representative:**

The Honorable (Full Name)  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator:

Dear Representative:

Note: When writing to the Chair of a Committee, or the Speaker of the House, it is proper to address them as: Dear Mr. or Madam Chairman, or Dear Mr. or Madam Speaker