

Letter Writing Tips

OPEN THE LETTER IN AN OFFICIAL MANNER.

If you are writing to an elected official, show respect for the position by using the title of the office, and the official's full name.

Example:

January 5, 2008

Title [Name of Representative or Senator]

House of Representatives [OR] U.S. Senate

Office Address

Washington, D.C. 20515

EXPLAIN THE PURPOSE FOR YOUR LETTER.

Let your reader know immediately what your letter is about. Tell him/her why you are concerned or pleased that a particular decision is being considered.

Example: The proposed increase in the gasoline tax will make the cost of transportation unreasonably high for commuters in the metropolitan area.

SUMMARIZE YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE ISSUE/DECISION BEING CONSIDERED.

State the general impact that you expect to occur if a particular decision is made.

Example: The creation of a peer-counseling program at our high school will help reduce the number of teen pregnancies in our community.

EXPLAIN YOUR POSITION ON THIS ISSUE.

Describe in detail why you feel the decision made will lead to the impact you foresee.

Example: This will provide opportunities for our high school students to discuss pressures they experience with their peers at this critical time in their lives.

DESCRIBE WHAT ANY CHANGES WILL MEAN TO YOU, AND TO OTHERS.

Describe specifically the positive or negative effects the decision will have on you personally and on those you represent. The more people affected by the decision, the more convincing you may be.

Example: This program will help provide career opportunities for teenagers in our community.

DESCRIBE WHAT ACTION YOU HOPE THE OFFICIAL WILL TAKE.

State specifically what action you (and those you represent) hope the official will take--and by what date, if there is a deadline.

Example: We hope you realize the best course of action to protect our community's infants and young children is to vote "yes" to House Bill #689b.

CLOSE AND SIGN YOUR LETTER.

Thank the official and sign your full name.