

How to Make Your Letters Most Effective

When you write:

- The more personal your letter is, the more influence it has. Say what's on your mind and in your heart. Use your own words wherever possible, but don't think you have to write like an expert to have influence.
- Handwrite your letter if your handwriting is legible and this is easy for you. If you prefer to type a letter, make sure you sign it and then add a handwritten P.S. and hand write the address on the envelope.
- It's best to be brief, clear and specific. Keep your letter to one page if possible.
- State your opinion and your specific request within the first few sentences.
- Always ask the policy maker to state her or his position in a response to your letter or ask them a question that you say you would like them to answer.
- Be courteous and reasonable. Show respect for the policy makers you contact, even when you know you disagree with them. We are all in this together and will have to work together to find the solutions.
- Include your address on your letter as well as your envelope (an envelope can get lost) and the date.

Some optional enhancements:

- Enclose an article that has bearing on the issue you are writing about.
- Describe how the issue affects you personally or your community.
- Write or call a second time. Once they have given you a reply, a follow-up can have a stronger impact on policymakers and their aides than the initial communication. Thank the policy maker for taking a "correct" stand or ask for clarification or question any unsatisfactory answers they have given you. Always ask them to respond to your letter.
- Keep a copy of your letter (if you type them) and responses. You never know when you might want to refer exactly to something you said before or that was said to you.
- Some people feel putting a note on the envelope like, "GHG reductions needed now!" may help.

GOOD LUCK AND THANK YOU.

"If the people lead, eventually the leaders will follow."

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world, indeed it's the only thing that ever has." Margaret Mead