



10 Tips for Writing a Strong Letter to Your Legislator

1. Open letter with “Dear State Representative _____, or Dear State Senator _____,” If you’re writing to a federal Senator or Representative, open with Dear Senator _____ or Dear Representative _____ .
2. Mention immediately if you are a constituent. (“As a resident of District xx, I...”)
3. Cover only one subject per letter. Include the bill # if you know it, and specifically say if you support or oppose that bill. You can check our website or our issue briefs to support your case.
4. Stick to one-two key points about how/why you support or oppose specific legislation. If relevant, mention how it impacts their district. A *brief* personal statement (1-2 sentences maximum) can help them see the importance of the issue.
5. Mention their stand if you know that they have already taken a position.
6. Request a reply.
7. *Check your letter for length.* One page letters are more likely to be read in their entirety. Two page letters are likely to be just scanned.
8. Mail your letter right away. *The only effective letter is one that is written and **mailed!***
9. Follow-up to replies. Thank legislators for their support.
10. Send us a copy or, if it’s by e-mail, BCC us (erika@safetyandjustice.org). Let us know if follow up information if needed. You’ve just made a difference!



Letter to Your Legislator *Sample*

February 8, 2010

Dear State Senator Shields,

I live in your district and am writing in support of the 2009 Safety and Savings Act (HB 3508). The 2009 Safety and Savings Act, which was passed during the 2009 session, delays the implementation of Measure 57 and provides increased earned time for certain prisoners, among other cost-saving reforms.

It is important to me that we keep Oregon safe during this time of financial crisis. I know you and your colleagues made difficult budget decisions during the last legislative session, but I commend your choices and the passage of the 2009 Safety and Savings Act. As an advocate for survivors of domestic violence, it's important to me that Oregonians are receiving the services they need. The 2009 Safety and Savings Act safeguarded the most critical of public safety services, including the Oregon Domestic and Sexual Violence Services Fund and Oregon State Police. By modestly increasing earned time, you made sure all Oregonians stayed safe, and I want to thank you for this.

I urge you to resist attempts by opponents of the 2009 Safety and Savings Act to repeal the earned-time element of the legislation. As one of your constituents, I want my voice heard in Salem: We need Oregon to be smart and use its resources to make sure both survivors of violence and those convicted of crime have the resources they need to be healthy and successful.

Thank you for your support of the 2009 Safety and Savings Act last year. I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Erika Spaet
3924 N. Williams Ave.
Portland, OR

February 2010