



WRITING TO YOUR LEGISLATOR

WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO WRITE

- Legislators highly value letters and e-mails from their constituents. Letters are a great way to express your personal connection to an issue while conveying your opinion.

WHEN TO WRITE

- Write your senators and representatives when you want them to vote a certain way or to express your position on a particular issue.
- Watch your e-mail for alerts from SfN or other science advocacy organizations when there are key votes happening in Congress.

HOW TO FIND CONTACT INFORMATION

- Capwiz allows you to look up your representatives in Congress using your zip code and offers sample letters (see section on CapWiz below). It is available on the SfN Web site at www.sfn.org/legalert.
- Most senators and representatives post their contact information on their Web sites. The main Web site for the U.S. House of Representatives is www.house.gov and the Senate Web site is www.senate.gov.
- Many legislators request that you fill out an online form available on the legislator's Web site. While this may seem rigid, it assures that your letter will be sent directly and immediately to the legislator's office and routed to the appropriate person.
Note: Since the anthrax and ricin attacks on Congressional offices several years ago, additional mail screening processes have been implemented that can delay mail delivery up to two weeks in addition to the normal mailing time. For that reason, it is suggested that you use an online form, an e-mail, or fax to send your letter to your legislators.

WHAT TO WRITE

- State that you are a constituent.
- Include your institution and credentials, and your full name and address.
- State your reason for writing in the first paragraph of your letter.
- If you are writing about a specific piece of legislation, include the bill number (S. ___ in the Senate and H.R. ___ in the House of Representatives). If you are not sure about the bill number, try searching for it on the Library of Congress' legislative information Web site, www.thomas.gov. Also, visit www.sfn.org/issues for SfN's statements on science funding, animals in research, and stem cells, or go to www.sfn.org/legalert and click on the blue tab that says Issues & Legislation to learn about bills in Congress relevant to science and research.
- Explain how the issue affects you or your institution. Personal anecdotes are particularly effective.
- Thank the legislator.

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CAPWIZ

- CapWiz is an online tool SfN uses to make it easy for you to contact Members of Congress at critical times.
- SfN will send you an e-mail alert when Congress needs to hear from neuroscientists on a particular issue. A pre-written letter will be available on SfN's CapWiz Web site to send to your legislators. Take a little extra time to personalize the letter for more impact.
- You can also use CapWiz anytime to send a letter to Congress by visiting the SfN Web site at www.sfn.org/legalert. Enter your zip code to find a list of your legislators, then click "e-mail" underneath one of them to write and send a letter online.

TIPS

- Cover only one issue per letter.
- Keep your letter to one page.
- Type your letter or write legibly.
- Include your full address with zip code.
- If possible, send your letter on your institution's letterhead. (Consult your institution's policies regarding this possibility.)
- Congressional offices receive huge amounts of mail and may or may not have the resources to respond to every letter they receive. If you want to have a better chance of receiving a response, ask a question in your letter and ask for a response.

ADDRESSING SENATORS

The Honorable (full name)
(Office address)
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator (last name):

ADDRESSING REPRESENTATIVES

The Honorable (full name)
(Office address)
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative (last name):



EXAMPLE LETTER

Date

The Honorable _____

Office Address

United States House of Representatives/United States Senate

City, State Zip

Dear Representative/Senator _____:

As a scientist and a constituent, I urge you to support a 6.5 percent increase in funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in fiscal year 2009. NIH research is the foundation for future medical breakthroughs, which will save lives and money. The federal government's investment in research must be sustained in order to translate today's scientific findings into tomorrow's bedside treatments. Recent discoveries, such as those listed below, are a direct result of robust funding for the NIH.

- The development of drugs that reduce the severity of symptoms for those suffering with multiple sclerosis and Parkinson's disease.
- The identification of stroke treatment and prevention methods.
- The discovery of a new class of antidepressants that produce fewer side effects than their predecessors.
- The creation of new drugs to help prevent epileptic seizures.
- The expansion of treatments for the psychotic symptoms of schizophrenia.

The money invested in NIH is redistributed to communities across the nation, including our district/state. Biomedical research also creates jobs and stimulates the local economy. Please use federal dollars to improve the quality of life for the people in our community. Please make medical and health research a higher priority for our nation by continuing the investment in the NIH. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Your Title

Your Address

Your City, State Zip

Your Phone Number