



Tips on Writing to Your Elected Legislators

Writing a letter in your own words is probably the most efficient and effective way to influence your State Legislators. Legislators depend on constituents to educate them about what is happening in their district and what legislation is most important. Since Legislators receive only a handful of letters on most issues, each letter carries real power.

Letter-Writing Tips:

Think about your letter as having three paragraphs, or parts.

1. The opening paragraph should state who you are (example: a constituent, health care worker, person with illness etc.) State why you are writing (example: need for an overhaul to our health care system). Urge the Legislator to take a specific action (vote in favor of the MN Health Act which creates the MN Health plan, single-payer for all Minnesotans).

2. The second paragraph should tell your story in a personal way and then give evidence to support it. (Example: discuss being denied coverage, or having health care bills you can't afford, or having to change providers when you change a job). Be personal, brief and honest. Give some supporting facts. (Example: The US is the only industrialized country in the world not to have universal health coverage. We spend more than any other country on health care but the World Health Organization ranks us 37th in outcomes and fairness.)

3. The third paragraph should be a brief restatement of your request and provide final encouragement. When possible, somewhere in your letter you should also try to thank your Legislator for some action they've taken in the past or just for being a public servant.

General Tips

- A mailed or faxed handwritten letter receives much greater attention than a preprinted card or letter. A short story about your personal experience makes your letter more powerful.
- Make a specific request: Please Pass the Minnesota Health Act! Please support single-payer health care!
- One-page letters are ideal. Say what you need to say, but be as brief as possible.
- Keep your letter to one issue. A letter with a laundry list of issues has less impact than a letter on one topic.
- Make it legible and neat. Legible handwritten letters and well-typed letters are both effective.
- Do not write nasty or insulting letters to your elected officials. It is not an effective means of persuasion.
- Make sure you include your full name, address, phone and/or email.

To find out who represents you and how to contact them, call or go online:

<http://geo.commissions.leg.state.mn.us/districts/start.html>

House: (651) 296-2146 or 1 (800) 657-3550

Senate: (651) 296-0504 or (651) 296-2887