

Communicating with Elected Officials

Tips On Telephoning Your Elected Representatives

To find the phone numbers of your senators and representative call the U.S. Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121 and ask for your senator's or representative's office.

Remember that telephone calls are usually taken by a staff member—not the member of Congress. Ask to speak with the aide who handles the issue about which you wish to comment.

After identifying yourself, tell the aide you would like to leave a brief message, such as: "Please tell Senator/Representative (Name) that I support/oppose (S.____/H.R.____)." OR "Please tell Senator/Representative (Name) that I support federal funding of (name specific federal program)."

You will also want to state reasons for your support or opposition to the bill. Ask for your senators' or representative's position on the bill. You may also request a written response to your telephone call.

Tips on Writing Congress

A letter is the most popular choice of communication with a congressional office. If you decide to write a letter, this list of helpful suggestions will improve the effectiveness of the letter:

1. Your purpose for writing should be stated in the first paragraph of the letter. If your letter pertains to a specific piece of legislation, identify it accordingly, e.g., House bill: H. R. _____, Senate bill: S._____.
2. Be courteous, to the point, and include key information, using examples to support your position. **HINT:** Convey a personal experience, if possible.
3. Address only one issue in each letter; and, if possible, keep the letter to one page.
4. Please ensure your address is written underneath your signature so they know you are a constituent.
5. **Request a response.** You should receive written response from your members of Congress to your letters. Always request that the Member write you back to let you know where they stand on your issue of concern.
6. Fax the Daughters of Penelope headquarters a copy of your letter. This helps us with our direct outreach to congressional staff.

Note: For time-sensitive issues, please fax your letter to the congressional office as opposed mailing it. Security screening of the mail makes for slower delivery of your letter.

Addressing Correspondence

To a Senator:

The Honorable (full name)
(Rm.#) (name of) Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

To a Representative:

The Honorable (full name)
(Rm.#) (name of) House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

Note: When writing to the Chair of a Committee or the Speaker of the House, it is proper to address them as:

- Dear Mr. Chairman or Madam Chairwoman:
- Dear Madam Speaker or Mr. Speaker:

Tips on E-mailing Congress

Generally, the same guidelines apply as with writing letters to Congress. You may find and e-mail your representative and senators directly from <http://www.house.gov/writerep/> or http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm, respectively.

- Again, please send a copy of your e-mail to the Daughters of Penelope headquarters. This helps us with our direct outreach to congressional staff.