Writing to Your Legislator

Individually written letters (not form letters) are powerful tools for influencing your elected officials.

How to Find Your State and Federal Legislators
If you have a computer, go to http://www.legis.state.pa.us/index.cfm. In the top right hand corner is a box, “Find Members By.” Click on “address” or “county” and then fill in the blanks. This site will also give you information about bills, committee meetings and nearly everything you ever wanted to know about the work of the Pennsylvania General Assembly. You can find home district office addresses and phone numbers for your State Senators and Representatives as well.

If you don’t have access to a computer, try calling your County Election Bureau. You’ll find the phone number in the blue pages of the phone book. (If you can find a phone book.)

How to Address Your Letter
To the U.S. Senate:
   The Honorable (Full Name)
   Senate Office Building
   Washington, DC 20515
Dear Senator (fill in last name)

To the U.S. House of Representatives:
   The Honorable (Full Name)
   House Office Building
   Washington, D.C. 20515
Dear Congressman (fill in last name)

To the State Senate:
   The Honorable (Full Name)
   Senate Post Office
   Main Capitol Building, Harrisburg, PA 17120
Dear Senator (fill in last name)

To the State House of Representatives:
The Honorable (Full Name)
House Post Office
Harrisburg, PA 17120
Dear Representative (fill in last name)

If Congress or the PA General Assembly is “in session” (meeting in Washington or Harrisburg), it’s usually best to write to their Capitol Offices. See above on how to address the Capitol Offices. If they are not in session, you may want to write to their home district offices. When in doubt, call and ask which is best.

E-mailing and faxing are okay, but many legislators still rely heavily on regular mail. Again, call the legislators office to ask what they prefer.

Tips on Writing a Good Letter
• If you want them to pay attention, write to your own legislators. They listen to the people who live and vote in their districts (their “constituents”).
• Be sure to include your full address so that they can write back. You may also want to include your phone, e-mail or other contact information.
• Date your letter.
• Keep it short and simple. One page is best, two at most.
• In the first paragraph, explain who you are (if you’re writing as a concerned individual or writing on behalf of an organization). Also explain why you are writing. If you’re writing about a bill, include the bill name or subject and bill number.
• Explain your position. Use personal examples.
• Be clear about what you want the legislator to do.
• Ask for a response.
• Write on only one issue at a time.
• Make your tone positive.
• Follow up. Especially if they do what you ask, write again to say thanks.