**Writing a Letter to Lawmaker**

 As part of your Civic Engagement Portfolio, you are required to type at least one formal letter to a local, state or federal politician about an issue that is important to you. (You many write up to two letters.) *(Letters must be to a politician)* We expect that you will mail at least one of your letters after they have been graded by your teacher. If you get a response, please include that in your portfolio.

(These tips are adapted from <http://www.writeexpress.com/Write-Congress.html>.)

**1. State your purpose (Make your CLAIM)**
Be specific. Keep your letter focused by addressing only one issue or topic, and state your main purpose in the opening paragraph of your letter.

***Example:*** My name is Jane Smith, and I am writing this letter to encourage you to pass SB222.

**2. Make your letter personal.**
Keep your letter unique; don’t just copy a form letter and send it. Sending one hundred (or even one million) copies of the same letter is not an effective way to communicate the real concerns of real people.

Instead, write a personal letter, from your heart. Make sure to introduce yourself, and explain who you are. If there is a particular reason (such as professional or personal credentials or experience) that you are qualified to address the topic you are writing about, say so.

***Example:*** Because of the circumstances surrounding the tragic death of our neighbor, Mary Tucker, I know first-hand that this bill, if implemented, could save lives.

**3**. **Support your claim/purpose (State your EVIDENCE).**

Be informed when you write your letter, and you write, be honest and accurate in the information you present. Use specific statistics, numbers or examples. Mention the problem or issue you are addressing that directly affects you or those of your community. Write with purpose and passion, but is generally best to keep your letter factual, rather than emotional.

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| ***Example:*** |  | According to the Associated Press, in addition to the death of our neighbor Mary, last year in this country more than one hundred other people were killed in similar circumstances. *That is more than 100 families whose lives will never be the same.* |

**4**. **Make your request.**
Explain how your evidence supports your claim; indicate the specific action that you would like the representative to take, and by when (if applicable). For example, indicate whether you are writing in favor of or against a new bill or particular policy, and state what you hope that the representative will do. Be sure to identify the bill or other policy correctly. You can request, but do not demand, a response to your letter.

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| **Example:** |  | I urge you to join with thousands of other concerned individuals who support SB 2222. Please vote “Yes” on February 13. |

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**Additionally, be sure to…**

1. Remain professional and courteous.

Your street address

Your City, State and Zip

Date

The Honorable (full name)
(Room #) (Name) Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator:

*Paragraph 1*

*Paragraph 2*

*Paragraph 3*

Sincerely,

Your Name

Student at Metea Valley High School

Aurora, IL

2. Keep your letter clear and concise. *Generally, you should keep your*

 *letter to one page.*

3. Know to whom to send your letter.

You can find the name and address of your representative by going to

[Congress.org](http://www.congress.org).

When writing your letter, use the following heading format