

How to write to your legislator

Here are a few quick tips on writing to your state legislator:

- ✓ Use the normal business letter format, and put the letter on either your own personal letterhead or your practice letterhead. Make sure there's a return address.
- ✓ Type the letter! Do not send it written in longhand.
- ✓ Avoid email (or faxes) unless you already know your legislator and you are responding to a question or providing specific information.
- ✓ If you are a constituent, mention that fact. It makes a difference.
- ✓ Keep the letter to one page if at all possible.
- ✓ State the reason you are writing right up front, and be sure to mention the bill number (if one has been assigned). Be sure to say whether you want your legislator to *support* or *oppose* the bill... don't leave them guessing!
- ✓ If additional information is necessary, enclose it with your letter. *Note:* Most of the time, you will not need to provide attachments; your letter is intended to share your views with the lawmaker. Your association lobbyists probably will already have given the legislator detailed information about the issue.
- ✓ Be sure to ask for a reply, and then share the response with your state ophthalmology society!
- ✓ Always be respectful when communicating with a legislator, and never threaten.
- ✓ *Do not* enclose a campaign contribution when you are writing about pending legislation. Leave that to another time.

Here's the proper format for addressing correspondence:

Senate

The Honorable John Jones
Illinois State Senate
Statehouse
Springfield, IL 62706

Dear Senator Jones:

House

The Honorable Sally Smith
Illinois House of Representatives
Statehouse
Springfield, IL 62706

Dear Representative Smith: