

# How to Contact YOUR Legislator

Science Facts and Analysis from Science for Georgia

Contacting your legislator is an effective way to voice your concerns, opinions, and support for various issues. Legislators represent a diverse range of constituents, and your communication can help them understand your perspective and make informed decisions. Legislators cannot be experts on every issue, so providing them with a well-constructed position makes their job of representing your interests easier. When you write, email, call, or post to your legislator, they assume you represent many voices in their community, emphasizing the importance of your opinion.

This handout will guide you on how to construct clear, concise, and impactful outreach to your representative.

## What to Say: Be Clear, Concise, and Respectful

You must only focus on **one issue per communication**. Before you put pen to paper, decide the singular issue you are reaching out about.

### Introduce Yourself

- Mention that you live in the legislator's district, providing your name and zip code.
- If applicable, mention your qualifications to speak on the issue or any relevant group memberships.

### Be Clear and Concise - Think "Straightforward" and "Succinct"

- Clearly state your stance on the issue, using the subject line in emails (e.g., "Please vote YES on Bill 23").
- Support your position with a maximum of three concise arguments as rationale (one paragraph in total).

### Provide a Personal Narrative on the Issue:

- Share a personal story about how the issue directly affects you or your community/state.
- Highlight the importance of addressing the issue and its potential impact.

### Highlight a Personal Connection (if possible):

- Mention if you have previously voted for the legislator or have had a personal interaction.
- Find common ground, such as shared interests or affiliations.

### Be Passionate **and** Respectful:

- Convey your passion and concern in a positive manner.
- Show that you care genuinely about the issue and its impact on the community.

### Sign Your Name and Address:

- Include your full name and address to establish authenticity and ensure your message is taken seriously.

## Who Reads Your Message?

At the state level, legislators themselves typically read your message, while at the federal level, it is usually read by a staff member.

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## How to Communicate:

- ❑ Emails: Personalized emails are the fastest and most direct form of communication. Avoid using form letters and strive for personalization.
- ❑ Postcards and Letters: These demonstrate time and effort and can be impactful. However, they may not be suitable for time-sensitive matters.
- ❑ Phone Calls: While phone calls are quick, they may be less effective on the state level due to limited staff. On the federal level, where more staff is available, phone calls can be an effective way to voice your opinion on urgent matters.

## Does It Make a Difference?

Yes, legislators genuinely listen to their constituents. Your letters, along with collective public concerns, have resulted in significant policy changes in the past. Remember that change takes time, and your continuous engagement helps build momentum for long-term progress.

By writing a well-crafted letter to your legislator, you can make a meaningful impact on issues that matter to you. Remember to be clear, concise, respectful, and passionate in your communication. Your letter serves as an opportunity to establish a relationship, amplify your voice, and contribute to the decision-making process. Together, we can create positive change in our communities and beyond.

## Sample Letter

Dear Rep X,

I am Vicky Voter, and I live in your district. ← **(Identify yourself)**.

I ask that you support programs to reduce illegal tire dumping. ← **(Concisely and clearly point out your issue)**. This is important because tire dumps have been shown to cause chronic health problems in nearby communities. The standing water attracts vermin that carry disease. The runoff waste seeps into the local farmland and water sources. ← **(Provide rationale)**.

My Aunt Louise lives near an unregulated tire dump. She now has chronic asthma. The fumes make her symptoms worse. After too many sick days, she lost her job and is now on disability. She has worked all her life as a teacher. She loved helping people. Now, she can no longer do the things she loves. Not only is she suffering, but her local community has lost out on a terrific teacher. ← **(Tell a personal story)**.

[OR Tire dumps are often located near low-income neighborhoods. Residents develop chronic diseases and cannot work, further sliding into economic vulnerability. Think of all the people who want to work, who could be making their communities better, and the opportunities lost.] ← **(rationale to show that you care, esp. if you don't have a personal story)**.

I voted for you last fall, in part, because of your platform about getting people back to work. ← **(Show your connection with the legislator)**.

Thank you for your time,  
Sincerely,  
Vicky Voter  
123 Main St, Your Town, State  
[vicky@fakeemailaddress](mailto:vicky@fakeemailaddress)

