

Tips for Writing a Letter to Your Member of Congress

Much of a lawmaker's time is spent in Washington D.C.; therefore, written communication is a critical piece of advocacy. When writing to a legislator as a member of the American Occupational Therapy Association, as a member of your state association, or as an occupational therapy practitioner or student, it is important to keep the following guidelines in mind.

1. Selecting materials

- Personal stationery should be used if your home address is in the district of the legislator and your place of work (clinic, facility, office, etc.) is in another district.
- If you own a private practice, use your facility's letterhead; however, DO NOT use your employer's letterhead.

2. Addressing the letter

Members of the U. S. House of Representatives:

The Honorable (full name)
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D. C. 20515

Dear Representative (last name):

Members of the U. S. Senate:

The Honorable (full name)
United States Senate
Washington, D. C. 20510

Dear Senator (last name):

3. Creating the letter content

- State the reason for writing. If you are extending an invitation to an event, to your facility, or you are requesting a meeting, include:
 - Time(s) and date(s) (Be flexible)
 - Amount/length of time you would like with the lawmaker
 - Purpose of the meeting, event, or visit
- If you are inviting them to your practice, provide brief background information such as number of employees, length of time in the community, etc.
- Communicate in your own words. Personalized letters more effective than utilizing pre-written templates.
- Keep your comments brief. **Only discuss one issue per letter** and present your information in a direct, concise, and organized manner.
- Be specific. Use the bill title and bill number (if available) to ensure clarity.
- **Relate the information directly to the legislator's constituents.** Explain how the issue affects you, your profession, and your patients and how it impacts their constituents, districts, and state.
- **Be constructive** and offer solutions. If a bill aims at addressing a specific problem, but seems to present the wrong solution, propose alternatives.
- **Be courteous and respectful in all communications.**
- **Keep in mind; letters of appreciation are always valued.** If your legislator displays an act of support for occupational therapy, a thank you letter will show your support for them and aid in building a lasting relationship.

4. Addressing the envelope

Members of the U. S. House of Representatives:

The Honorable (full name)
United States House of Representatives
(Address) House Office Building
Washington, D. C. 20515

Members of the U. S. Senate:

The Honorable (full name)
United States Senate
(Address) Senate Office Building
Washington, D. C. 20510

To find the contact information of your legislators or to write your legislator via email, please visit the Legislative Action Center at <http://capwiz.com/aota/home/>. An AOTA form letter is available; however, please feel free to personalize and customize the letter to your legislator. The Legislative Action Center is also helpful for locating your legislator's mailing address.