



Writing to Legislators

Here are the four most important things to remember when writing elected representatives:

1. Tell them you're a business owner in the State of Texas and if your business or home is in his or her district.
2. Tell them the issue (when the Legislature is not in session) or the bill number and subject (when the Legislature is in session). The RE line should say the action without them having to read the letter. For example, it should say OPPOSE HB 2324 that will hurt local businesses.
3. Explain the local impact.
4. Be clear about the action you want them to take (support the bill, oppose the bill, etc.).

More letter-writing tips:

- Properly address the legislator (see below). To ensure delivery, take the extra step to get the contact information of the chief of staff and copy him or her on the correspondence.
- Be timely. Write before an issue becomes big news, before the lawmaker takes a position. This gives the legislator time to reply. When writing about an imminent vote, make sure the letter gets there before the vote. Your insight wouldn't be much help if the vote was yesterday.
- Avoid form letters. Write your letter personally. Use your own words. Avoid slogans or phrases from form letters. If TAS provides a sample language, be sure to adapt it to your own circumstances wherever possible.
- Keep the letter short, no more than one side of a single page.
- Begin by identifying the bill or issue you're writing about and focus on only one bill or one issue per letter. You don't want to dilute the importance of the main point.
- Explain the local impact of the bill. Personal experiences or the likely effect of proposed legislation on your business, clients and employees and any supporting evidence you can give.
- Express your point of view and your rationale strongly. Explain why the legislator should support your position; but don't get personal, never threaten, and never be offensive. Don't mention Election Day.
- Always provide a bill number unless this is more issue oriented rather than bill oriented.
- Be specific about what action you want the lawmaker to take; tell him or her to vote for or against something.
- Neatly type or write the letter, preferably on a business letterhead with a return address. Envelopes are discarded.
- Be respectful and reasonable.

- Ask the legislator for a response explaining his or her position on the issue. You are entitled to know how and why your elected representatives take a specific position.
- If your legislator responds, write a follow up letter promptly. If you get a noncommittal response from the first letter, don't be surprised. Often legislators won't take a position until the last minute. In the follow-up letter, restate your position and request. Remind the legislator that you will continue to follow the issue, refute, or agree with the legislator's position (if any), and thank him or her for writing.
- When legislators vote the way you ask, write them a brief note to let them know you appreciate it. If you worked with a member of the staff, include his or her name. This could ensure the member sees the letter!

Knowing how to correctly address public officials is important when advocating. Here is a list of key state officials and correct forms of address for letters and personal contacts:

The Governor

The Honorable (Full Name)
Governor of Texas
State Capitol
P.O. Box 12428
Austin, TX 78711-2428

Dear Governor (Last Name):

When speaking: "Governor (Last Name)"

The Lieutenant Governor

The Honorable (Full Name)
Lieutenant Governor of Texas
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, TX 78711-2068

Dear Governor (Last Name):

When speaking: "Governor (Last Name)"

The Speaker of the House

The Honorable (Full Name)
Speaker of the House
Texas House of Representatives
P.O. Box 2910

Austin, TX 78768-2910

Dear Speaker (Last Name):

When speaking: “(Mr. or Ms.) Speaker”

State Representative

The Honorable (Full Name)
Texas House of Representatives
P.O. Box 2910
Austin, TX 78768-2910

Dear Representative (Last Name):

When speaking: “Representative (Last Name)”

State Senator

The Honorable (Full Name)
State Senate
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, TX 78711-2068

Dear Senator (Last Name):

When speaking: “Senator (Last Name)”

United States Representative

The Honorable (Full Name)
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative (Last Name):

When speaking: “Representative (Last Name)”

United States Senator

The Honorable (Full Name)
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator (Last Name):

When speaking: "Senator (Last Name)"

E-mail

Although all members of the Texas Legislature can be reached by e-mail, they may not check it regularly. The e-mail address for Senators is `firstname.lastname@senate.state.tx.us`; for Representatives, the e-mail address is `firstname.lastname@house.state.tx.us`.

Fax

The fax number for all senators in Austin is 512-463-0326. The fax number for all representatives in Austin is 512-463-5896. Because of the limited number of fax machines in the Texas House and Senate, there is a good chance messages sent using this technology will get tied up, misrouted, or lost. It may be best to use other, more dependable, communications tools.