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/](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.