

“Dos” & “Don’ts” For Writing to a Legislator

Do

- Address them properly in writing:
The Honorable John Smith or
Assemblemember/Senator
John Smith
State Capitol Room _____
Sacramento, CA 95814
Dear Assemblyman/Senator
Smith:
- Send typed/word-processed letters
- Be concise
- Mention the bill in question
- Use your own words
- Use your own stationary or company letterhead
- Get permission to use your company letterhead!
- State your reasons for supporting or opposing the bill
- Be courteous & reasonable
- Include your address & telephone number & sign your name clearly
- Congratulate the legislator on his/her actions you liked
- Include newspaper articles or editorials that support your view
- Send accurate information
- Send your letter(s) before action is to be taken in the legislature
- Use correct grammar & short sentences

Don’t

- Be long-winded
- Hand write your letter
- Adopt a righteous tone
- Demand anything
- Be rude or threatening
- Mention more than one bill in a letter
- Forget that a few short letters carry much more weight than one long one
- Remind the legislator that you are a taxpayer
- Send a form letter
- Apologize for writing or taking valuable time
- Be vague or deceptive
- Write only to those lawmakers who either agree or disagree with you
- Send “carbon copies” of letters to other legislators (They should all be originals)
- Even *hint* that you think there is something sleazy or dishonorable about politics – even if you think there is
- Assume that every legislator is an expert on every issue