

## OPSC – “How To” Write to a Legislator

Letters help legislators gauge the mood of their constituents and writing to your legislator can be an extremely powerful tool. To be as effective as possible, your letter should contain most of the following **W's**:

- **WHO** are you? Clearly state your name, your business/practice, any important local affiliations, the number of staff you have and/or the number of patients you serve.
- **WHY** are you writing? Describe the issue, its impact on your practice and why it is important to the profession, patients, the community, etc.
- **What** solution are you proposing on the issue? Describe the position or specific action you would like the legislator to take.
- **WHERE** is the issue in the process? The reader's first response to your letter will be to put the issue into a legislative context.
- **WHEN** will the issue be acted upon? Is this something that needs immediate action or is this an issue that will be debated in the future.

### Letter Format

Letters requesting a legislator to take direct action on a bill have a very specific format. Always use company, office or personal letterhead to remind the legislator that the issue is important to people in his district.

(Date)

The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_  
California State Assembly  
State Capitol Building  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Bill XX (Author): SUPPORT/OPPOSE**

Dear Assembly Member XX:

(Date)

The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_  
California State Senate  
State Capitol Building  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: National Osteopathic Medicine Week**

Dear Senator XX:

### Keep OPSC Informed

OPSC staff can provide talking points, sample letters and other useful information for your correspondence. Copy the Association and their advocate on all letters so that the legislator makes the connection in Sacramento and OPSC can follow-up as appropriate. Also send OPSC any response received from the legislator.

## OPSC – “How To” Talk to a Legislator

Direct communication with legislators provides an opportunity to exchange information and make a local connection between who you are and your interests/needs. This interaction is designed to:

- Educate legislators and their staff about DO issues, achievements and challenges
- Establish or strengthen communication channels between legislative offices, the Association and staff;
- Create or enhance personal relationships between the legislator, his/her staff and the profession.
- Secure legislator support and willingness to take desired action on issues/bills.

The best results can be achieved by following these steps:

**Clarify your Goals** If you need to discuss pressing issues, it is better to ask for a meeting the legislator’s office and invite other DO representatives. For a more relaxed meeting, invite the legislator to your offices or other professional setting. For pure relationship building, choose a fundraiser or a social event.

### **Coordinate the Encounter**

Arrange the meeting/call with the legislator’s scheduler. Fridays and recesses are a convenient day for legislators to attend meetings in their district because the legislature is normally not in session.

### **Manage the meeting**

Work with the Association to prepare talking points and an agenda in advance of the discussion. Do not avoid “small talk” and be prepared to listen to the legislator talk about his/her world. However, stay on point with your own agenda and be very specific about any related requests for legislative action.

### **Follow-up**

Be sure to provide any additional information discussed during the meeting. It closes the loop and gives you another opportunity for interaction with the legislator.

### **Keep OPSC Informed**

Let OPSC know when you have a legislative encounter. Depending on the occasion, staff will help target the issues for discussion, provide information about the legislator before you meet and advise on whom else might attend. It is also important to link your local conversations to the Association’s Sacramento Advocacy.

## OPSC – “How To” Host A Legislator

Legislators are generally interested in pursuing policies that improve the quality of life for their constituents and benefit their community. DOs play an important role in the healthcare continuum; it's critical that legislators and their staff become familiar with the profession and related issues.

Hosting a legislator visit to your office, clinic, campus or other practice setting provides him/her with a valuable opportunity to see first-hand who your patients are and what Osteopathic medicine is all about.

Your role in such a visit is to put a face on the issues, help the legislator understand how they impact patients/providers and guide his/her thinking in future actions in this regard. The encounter will be enhanced if you do the following:

**Preparation** – Prior to the visit, make sure you, other practitioners and staff are up on the issues. Touch-base with OPSC to get current information on hot issues and the latest on the legislator.

**Scheduling** – Contact the legislator's district office either by phone or in person. Follow-up with a written invitation and be prepared to follow-up again. If the legislator is unavailable, invite the district office Chief of Staff, who is the legislator's primary adviser on issues impacting his/her district. Decide what type of visit to have and what you expect to accomplish.

**Simple Visit** – Conduct a simple tour of your office/facility. Allow the legislator to interact with other practitioners, key staff, and even patients. Legislators are often interested in hearing from a cross-section of folks about the issues. Set aside a few minutes at the end to underscore any key points and cover questions.

**Meet & Greet** – Conduct the tour and/or arrange for the legislator to meet with other DOs, fellow practitioners, local healthcare leaders, etc. for a deeper discussion on the issues. Serve lunch to extend the duration and allow for a mix of casual and critical conversation.

**Fundraiser** – Combine the visit with a campaign event for the legislator. Invite other DOs and colleagues to contribute to the legislator's election effort (amount to be determined by the invitees and type of event). Remember to keep the conversation a little more broad and always separate politics from policy – no discussion of specific bills or requests for legislative action. Serve refreshments to lighten it up and make it more social.

**Follow-up** – VERY IMPORTANT – View this as part of building an ongoing relationship with your elected official, stay in contact and become a resource for your legislator and his/her staff.