

Communicating with Your Elected Official

Communicating with your elected official is your right and a responsibility you should actively engage. Here are some basic tips on properly communicating with your elected official.

TELEPHONE:

To find your senators' and representative's phone numbers, call the U.S. Capitol Switchboard at (202)224-3121 and ask for your senators' and/or representative's office.

Remember that telephone calls are usually taken by a staff member, not the member of Congress. Ask to speak with the aide who handles the issue about which you wish to comment.

After identifying yourself, tell the aide you would like to leave a brief message, such as: "Please tell Senator/Representative (Name) that I support/oppose (S.___/H.R.___)."

You will also want to state reasons for your support or opposition to the bill. Ask for your senators' or representative's position on the bill. You may also request a written response to your telephone call.

LETTER:

The letter is the most popular choice of communication with a congressional office. If you decide to write a letter, this list of helpful suggestions will improve the effectiveness of the letter:

1. Your purpose for writing should be stated in the first paragraph of the letter. If your letter pertains to a specific piece of legislation, identify it accordingly, e.g., House bill: H. R. ____, Senate bill: S._____.
2. Be courteous, to the point, and include key information, using examples to support your position.
3. Address only one issue in each letter; and, if possible, keep the letter to one page.

Senate

The Honorable (full name)
__(Rm.#)__(name of)Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

House of Representatives

The Honorable (full name)
__(Rm.#)__(name of)House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

Note: When writing to the Chair of a Committee or the Speaker of the House, it is proper to address them as: Dear Mr. Chairman, Madam Chairwoman, Dear Madam Speaker or Mr. Speaker

E-MAIL:

Generally, the same guidelines apply as with writing letters to Congress. You may find and e-mail your senators and representative directly from the AFSA CAPWIZ website at URL: www.hqafsa.org or you may visit the Library of Congress at URL: www.thomas.gov