

## Tips for Writing Your Legislator

**Begin by stating that you are a constituent or are writing on behalf of a constituent.**

Make sure you write your return address on the envelope, so that the legislator's office staff knows immediately that you are a constituent. If you are sending an e-mail, state that you are a constituent in the subject line.

**Personalize your letter.** Research consistently shows that handwritten letters have the most impact. In making your case on the issue, use personal examples to further distinguish your letter. Include with your letter a fact sheet on dental care for patients with disabilities.

**If the legislator has supported your issues in the past, acknowledge this.** Give reasons why the legislator must continue or intensify his or her support.

**Show restraint.** Keep your letter brief—one to one-and-a-half pages at the most.

**Quantity Counts.** Persuade a like-minded friend, family member, or colleague to write a letter as well. Again, quantity is critical. Legislators pay attention to issues when they believe that many of their constituents care about that issue.

**Follow up.** In the letter, ask your legislator for a response. To get a better picture of your legislator's position, consider following your letter with a phone call or visit.

Report your letter. When you're part of a grassroots lobbying effort, your participation is helpful only if the people mobilizing the effort know about it. Let your grassroots organization know you wrote the letter, copy the President and/or the Legislative Committee Chairperson, and what you intend to do to follow up.

**Communicate more than once.** Again, **quantity is important.** As you monitor the issue, communicate with the legislator through phone calls, additional letters, e-mail, or visits to ask for specific support or action as appropriate to the process.

**If you use e-mail** to communicate with your legislator, do so in the context of an ongoing relationship in which you use other methods as the foundation of your communication.