

## Tips on writing to Michigan State Legislators

Here are some suggestions on how your letters to legislators can be most effective:

1. ADDRESS IT PROPERLY: Know your legislator's full name and correct spelling. Examples:

For STATE SENATOR

The Honorable (full name)  
State Senator  
State Capitol Building  
P.O. Box 30036  
Lansing, MI 48909-7536

Dear Senator (last name):

For STATE REPRESENTATIVE

The Honorable (full name)  
State Representative  
State Capitol Building  
P.O. Box 30014  
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

Dear Representative (last name):

When communicating by email, attach your formal letter on your letterhead and summarize it in the email.

2. ALWAYS INCLUDE YOUR FIRST AND LAST NAME AND ADDRESS ON THE LETTER OR E-MAIL. A letter cannot be answered if there is no return address and this shows you are a constituent. You may want to include your phone number(s) and email address as well.

3. USE YOUR OWN WORDS. Avoid form letters and petitions. They tend to be identified as organized pressure campaigns and are often answered with form replies. However, a petition does let the legislator know that the issue is of concern to a large number of people (addresses with zip codes should be given for each signature). One thoughtful, factual, and well-reasoned letter carries more weight than 100 form letters or printed postcards.

4. TIME THE ARRIVAL OF YOUR LETTER OR E-MAIL. Try to write to your legislator, and the chairperson of the committee dealing with a bill, while a bill is still in committee and there is still time to take effective action. Sometimes a bill is out of committee, or has been passed, before a helpful, informative letter arrives which could have made a difference in the way the bill was written or in the final decision.

5. KNOW WHAT YOU ARE WRITING ABOUT. Identify the bill or issue of concern to you. Thousands of bills and resolutions are introduced in each session. If you write about a bill, try to give the bill number or describe it by popular title, such as "the Whistleblower's Act," or "the School Code."

6. BE REASONABLY BRIEF. Many issues are complex, but a single page, presenting your opinions, facts, arguments, or proposals as clearly as possible, is preferred and welcomed by most legislators.

7. **GIVE REASONS FOR YOUR POSITION.** Explain how the issue would affect you, your family, business, or profession—or the effect on your community or our state. If you have specialized knowledge, **SHARE IT WITH YOUR LEGISLATOR.** Concrete, expert arguments for or against the bill can be used by the legislator in determining the final outcome of a bill.

8. **BE CONSTRUCTIVE.** If a bill deals with a problem you admit exists, but you believe the bill is the wrong approach, explain what you believe to be the right approach.

9. **GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS SHOULD DETERMINE THEIR PRIORITY CONCERNS** and contact the legislator on those specific issues rather than on every issue. The “pen pal” who writes every few days on every conceivable subject tends to become a nuisance, rather than an effective voice of concern.

10. **YOU MAY NOT ALWAYS RECEIVE A LONG, DETAILED RESPONSE.** Legislators are very busy and usually cannot respond with long, personal replies to each correspondent. Priority is given to respond to constituent mail and organizational representatives concerned with the legislation.

11. **WRITE TO EXPRESS APPRECIATION** when you feel a legislator has done a good job. Legislators are human too and seldom receive “thank you” letters of encouragement.

Remember, on any one issue, even a few letters or e-mails to one legislator can have an important impact. Sometimes just one letter or e-mail, with a new perspective, or with clear-cut, persuasive arguments can be the decisive factor in a legislator’s action.