

Tips for Contacting Elected Officials

League of Women Voters Oregon

Whether or not you know the official with whom you want to communicate, some simple but important points should be kept in mind:

- be brief
- be clear
- be accurate
- be civil
- be persuasive
- be timely
- be persistent
- be grateful



When You Write an Email

- Keep your email short.
- Be absolutely sure you spell the official's name correctly and have the right address.
- If you're writing to several officials on the same subject, individualize the emails.
- Use your own words, not form letters.
- Clearly identify the issue (or bill) you are writing about, and only discuss one issue or bill per letter.
- Give definite and concise reasons for your position.
- Be specific. A few facts and figures supporting your position will be more effective than just stating your opinion.
- Explain the impact of the legislation or issue on you and other constituents. What needs are being met or unmet? Provide facts.
- Suggest, don't demand, a course of action. Be constructive.
- If you have expert knowledge or wide experience on the subject of your letter, let the legislator know of your expertise. Don't be condescending – be forthright and helpful.

- Ask, tactfully, for a response.
- Express your appreciation – say thanks.

Sample email:

Representative Hoyle

Please support H.R. 3449, the **Stronger Communities through Better Transit Act**. Since the pandemic began in 2020, there have been more than one billion additional transit trips each year. This is despite more than half of the US population living more than half a mile from any transit service. Even fewer people have access to quality, frequent transit and this is a particular problem in rural Lane County. Communities desire the advantages granted by more accessible public transit, and significantly more service is required to satisfy that demand.

If possible, please let me know your response to this request.

Thank you so much.

When You Write a Letter

- Keep your letter to a single page. If you must exceed one page, make the second page an attachment that elaborates on your one-page summary.
- Be absolutely sure you spell the official's name correctly and have the right address.
- If you're writing to several officials on the same subject, individualize the letters.
- Use your own words, not form letters.
- Clearly identify the issue (or bill) you are writing about, and only discuss one issue or bill per letter.
- Give definite and concise reasons for your position.
- Be specific. A few facts and figures supporting your position will be more effective than just stating your opinion.
- Explain the impact of the legislation or issue on you and other constituents. What needs are being met or unmet? Provide facts.

- Suggest, don't demand, a course of action. Be constructive.
- If you have expert knowledge or wide experience on the subject of your letter, let the legislator know of your expertise. Don't be condescending – be forthright and helpful.
- Ask, tactfully, for a response, and provide a return address.
- Express your appreciation – say thanks.

Sample Letter

Representative Val Hoyle
2134 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Hoyle,

Please support H.R. 3449, the **Stronger Communities through Better Transit Act**.

This legislation, introduced by Representative Hank Johnson, would transform communities and build upon a strong mandate from riders seeking greater affordability, accessibility, and quality of service.

Since the pandemic began in 2020, there have been more than one billion additional transit trips each year. This is despite more than half of the US population living more than half a mile from any transit service. Even fewer people have access to quality, frequent transit and this is a particular problem in rural Lane County. Communities desire the advantages granted by more accessible public transit, and significantly more service is required to satisfy that demand.

If possible, please let me know your response to this request.

Thank you so much.

Meeting with Your Elected Officials

- Make an appointment by letter or phone.
- Briefly outline the issues you wish to discuss in your letter or in your call. If you've had prior discussions about these issues, mention them.
- Don't insist on setting up the appointment through the official; he or she has competent helpers.

- Be as courteous with staff as you are with your elected officials.
- Arrive on time.
- Limit the issues you discuss to not more than three.
- Organize your presentation.
- Be brief, friendly, and to the point.
- Plan on not more than 15 minutes.
- Prepare a brief summary of your comments to leave with him or her, and documentation that confirms your message. The written message should restate exactly what you're asking of your elected official.
- Offer to provide additional information and assistance.
- Bring a second person to help present the message, but don't bring a crowd.
- If you're asked a question you can't answer, say so and ask for a chance to do some checking and provide the answer later.
- Send a thank you letter, whether the official has been able to help you or not.

For more information: <https://www.lwvor.org/communicating-with-elected-officials>