

WRITING EFFECTIVE EMAILS TO YOUR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

Many people think an email sent to legislators is just a waste of time but nothing could be further from the truth. Congressmen and Senators pay attention to their email. They have to because the writers' views form major listening posts for voter sentiment on pending legislation.

WHO READS YOUR EMAIL? The legislators themselves. It is very important to be specific concerning ONE subject per email.

FORM EMAILS & PETITIONS: Form emails with identical wording, long telegrams signed by lists of people, mimeographed petitions and other "bulk" entreaties carry little or no weight. Organize a brief, clear presentation on ONE subject. Briefly express why you or your specified organizations members are concerned. Describe action desired in brief format.

BE YOURSELF & WRITE YOUR OWN EMAIL: A carefully thought out individual email is appreciated by the lawmaker. Write your email to your senator or representative just as if you were writing to someone else. Set forth exactly why you consider a bill good or bad, and how you feel that it would affect you and your community.

COURTESY ALWAYS: Threats, warnings and abuse merely antagonize others. Effective email is courteous. Do not let him/her know that he/she is your second favorite candidate, especially if he/she lets you down on your bill. If you are in favor of what he/she is doing, remember to say thank you. Emails to a lawmaker for a job well done are altogether too rare.

FOLLOW THROUGH: Most all legislators answer their own email. If your reply is just a brief acknowledgement, email again to ask for more specific information, (For example – Precisely how he/she stands on this issue or how he/she feels toward its success. Does he/she propose to support or oppose this bill?)

TIMING: Send emails at the appropriate time – shortly before or during the time an issue is being discussed. At the time the bill is introduced, send a copy of your email to the chairman of the committee to which it was referred. When possible, always refer to the bill under discussion by its name and number.

PHONE CALL: A phone call is an effective means of communication to government officials. Use the same guidelines as you would in writing an email. Be organized, well-informed, brief and courteous. Write a follow up email if appropriate. Summarize your conversation and express your thanks.

TOLL FREE NUMBERS FOR INDIANA Senate and House

Senate: 1-800-382-9467 Indianapolis 317-232-9400

House: 1-800-382-9841 – Republican 1-800-382-9842 – Democrat

Indianapolis - 317-232-9600

How to Email Your Legislator

1. Make the letter YOURS! Use your own words. Form emails are quickly recognized and discounted.
 2. Limit each email to a single bill.
 3. Include the bill # and a brief description of the subject matter.
 4. BRIEFLY state why are interested in a particular bill. State why you want your legislator to vote for or against the bill or to help get it out of committee, etc. Try to limit your email length.
 5. Give pertinent reasons and facts. Don't guess at facts or base your email on rumors. Write from a personal perspective how this bill will affect you, your family, workplace or community. You want to scan and attach clipping from your local paper – highlight the mail points, and include the name of the newspaper and the date.
 6. Try to time your email to reach your legislator when the bill is being considered in his or her house.
 7. Be courteous. Never attack a legislator no matter what his or her past actions have been.
 8. In general, contact a legislator from another district only if he or she is chairperson of a committee you wish to influence.
 9. QUALITY, not quantity, counts. Contact a legislator only once on a subject unless you have new information to offer.
 10. Sign your name and include your email address to facilitate contact by the legislator.
 11. FOLLOW –UP. Thank a legislator for voting in support of your views.
 12. The proper way to address your legislator follows:

The Honorable _____	The Honorable _____
Indiana State Senate	Indiana House of Representatives
State House	State House
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204	Indianapolis, IN 46204
- Dear Senator _____, Dear Representative _____.
13. If it is an issue that you think should have the Governor's attention,
The Honorable
Governor of the State of Indiana
State House
Indianapolis, IN 46204
 14. E-mail addresses are available at <http://www.in.gov> (the "Access Indiana" site)