



You've Got Mail: Essential Tips for Effective Letter-Writing to Legislators

Concise, personalized letters and emails remain among the most effective ways PAs have of influencing their legislators, especially if they are sent in conjunction with a broader relationship-building strategy that includes personal interactions like participating in face-to-face and townhall meetings.

Members of Congress get hundreds of letters and emails every day, so you will want your letter stand out. Here are some tips that will help you write a letter to your legislators that makes an impact.

Constituency Matters

It's usually recommended that PAs send letters to the legislators who represent the district where you live and/or work. As constituents – and **voters** – your opinion matters a great deal to legislators who represent you. (Additionally, many of their email management systems have a mechanism to weed out communications from non-constituents.)

What to Say

- Be clear. State your subject clearly in the email subject line or first sentence of the letter. Stick to just one issue in the letter.
- Be introductory. Begin the letter/email by introducing yourself and stating that you are a constituent and a PA/PA student. Identify your city/town and where you work/attend PA school. Then, state your reason for writing. If your letter pertains to a specific piece of legislation, identify it by name and using the specific House or Senate number: e.g., The PAs Are Amazing Act, S. 123/HR 456.
- Be personal and local. AAPA and your CO might provide a sample letter, but you should always personalize any letter template; sending a generic form letter with no personal details or examples will diminish your advocacy strategy. **Always** explain the relevance to the legislator's community/state. Data is important, but personal examples demonstrating how the issue affects patient care in the legislator's community will carry even greater impact.
- Be specific about what action you want them to take. Do you want them to cosponsor the bill? Support it in Committee? Vote yes on the floor? Clearly state what action you support and offer recommendations about how you want the legislator to address concerns.
- Be helpful. Always offer to provide additional information if needed, and provide your contact information. In particular, let your legislator know that you are happy to serve as a trusted healthcare resource in their community.
- Be gracious. Remember to thank legislators and staff for their attention. Follow the issue and thank them later if take the action you requested. Always avoid personal attacks, threats of political

influence or demands, and never mention money or political contributions in conjunction with a legislative request

- Be concise. Try to keep your letter to one page, or your email to 3-4 paragraphs/500 words or less.

Addressing your Legislators

There are a few ways that you can identify and find contact information for your legislators.

- Log into [AAPA's Advocacy Action Center](#) and click Find My Legislators
- Learn your state's two Senators here: <https://www.senate.gov/senators/senators-contact.htm>
- Find your member of Congress using the US House of Representative's directory here: <https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>

Your legislators' websites will contain all the contact information you need. Many will also have a web form you can use in lieu of sending to an actual email address. (**Pro tip:** if you've met with a legislator's staffer, be sure to ask for their business card, and use their email address to contact them directly, bypassing the webform altogether).

Addressing a letter to a Senator:

The Honorable (Full Name)
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510
Dear Sen. (Last Name):

Addressing a letter to a Representative:

The Honorable (Full Name)
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515
Dear Representative (Last Name):

When writing to the Chair of a Committee or the Speaker of the House, it is proper to address them as:

Dear Mr. Chairman or Madam Chairwoman, or Dear Mr. Speaker.

Thank you for taking action on behalf of the PA profession! Contact Kristin Butterfield, AAPA's director of grassroots and political advocacy, with questions about contacting your legislators.