

Knights of Columbus Wright-Hennepin Council #4174

Advocacy Letter Tips and Template

Introduction

Few kinds of advocacy are more effective than contacting your political leaders directly with a personal message. Petitions and form letters may show where a number of people stand on an issue, but they rarely get a second glance. A thoughtful personal letter or email, on the other hand, is generally read and often gets a response.

It's not always easy to put strong feelings into words, but the most effective advocacy letters are polite and to the point. Passion is great, but clearly explaining the issue and its impact is essential. Tell them what you are concerned about, why it matters to you, and what you want them to do about it. It's that simple.

*Tips for Writing to Legislators**

- Don't write more than one page.
- Do type or print your letter so it's easy to read.
- Identify the issue at the beginning of the letter and cover only one issue per letter.
- Identify yourself and the reason for your expertise or interest.
- Use terms they will understand and avoid using abbreviations.
- Offer to assist on the issue if you can.
- Ask for a reply if you want one.
- Don't threaten or coerce.
- Be polite and reasonable, and try to respect their views.
- Be sure to say "thanks."
- For legislators, the salutation should read "Dear Representative:" or "Dear Senator:"—do not address you state representative as Congressman!

Additional Resources

- Minnesota State Legislature Citizen Participation Web Page: <http://www.leg.state.mn.us/leg/faq/faqtoc.asp?subject=20>
- Minnesota Office of the Governor: <http://www.governor.state.mn.us/contacts/index.htm>
- U.S. House of Representatives Write Your Representative Web Page: <https://writerep.house.gov/writerep/welcome.shtml>
- U.S. Senate How to Contact U.S. Senators Web Page: http://www.senate.gov/reference/common/faq/How_to_contact_senators.htm
- The White House Contact Us Web Page: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/contact/>

* These guidelines were modified from the Minnesota State Legislature Citizen Participation Web page at <http://www.leg.state.mn.us/leg/faq/faqtoc.asp?subject=20>.

Advocacy Letter Template

Use the space provided to work through this step-by-step template, which yields a simple, straightforward advocacy letter. Two sample letters appear on the following pages.

<p>Step 1: In 1-2 sentences, describe the issue and the action you are requesting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fill in the blanks: “I am writing to request that you [DESIRED ACTION] regarding [ISSUE or BILL].”• Include the correct bill number if you can.	
<p>Step 2: In 3-5 sentences, describe why it matters to you personally.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• First sentence: DESCRIBE yourself with regard to the issue. Do you have expertise? Why do you care about the issue, or why should they listen to you?• Middle sentence(s): EXPLAIN how this issue impacts you, your family or your community. What are your concerns or hopes?• Last sentence: DESCRIBE your desired outcome—if the requested action is taken, what should happen as a result?	
<p>Step 3: In 2-3 sentences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• REPEAT the desired action (from step 1).• OFFER to help and/or REQUEST a reply.• And THANK them.	

Sample Letter A

Sender's First and Last Name
Sender's Address
Sender's City, State ZIP

Month DD, YYYY

The President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I'm writing to ask you not to support the Freedom of Choice Act. As a Catholic, I believe that abortion is wrong. I do not want to see abortion more available to more people. I also do not want Catholic hospitals and doctors to be forced to act against their religious beliefs. I hope that pro-life doctors can continue to act on their conscience and that we can work for a country with less premarital sex, fewer unplanned pregnancies, and fewer abortions.

In conclusion, I hope you will not support FOCA. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Sender's Signature

Sender's First and Last Name

Sample Letter B

Sender's First and Last Name
Sender's Address
Sender's City, State ZIP

Month DD, YYYY

The President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I'm writing to ask you to reconsider your public support of the "Freedom of Choice Act," or FOCA, and if such a law is reintroduced and passes through Congress, to not sign it into law.

As a voting and practicing Catholic, I believe that abortion destroys an innocent human life and is fundamentally wrong. While I recognize that other people in our country may not share my deep personal convictions, I fear that this law will ultimately lead to public funding of abortion and undo pressure on Catholic and other anti-abortion doctors to provide abortion services and counseling against their conscience or face professional or economic consequences. I also believe that such a law will strengthen a culture that already sees children as an accessory and life as disposable. Your change of heart on this issue would be a significant step toward finding "common ground" with regard to abortion in the United States.

I hope you will take the time to understand the deep moral convictions so many of us hold on this issue and withdraw your support of FOCA. Thank you for your consideration, and may God bless you and your family as you lead our nation.

Sincerely,

Sender's Signature

Sender's First and Last Name