

*make an impact!*

## **Letters & Emails to Legislators**

One of the simplest and most effective advocacy tools is a personal letter. Elected officials are especially receptive to letters from constituents and often they keep track of the number of letters received and the opinions expressed in them. But numbers aren't everything, and even a few powerful letters on an important issue can have an impact.

If there is time, a snail mail letter is more likely to be read and considered by a legislator than an email. Sometimes, however, a mailed letter risks missing a small window for advocacy during a quickly moving legislative process. When an issue is especially urgent, you should either call, send a faxed letter, or send an email message to the targeted legislator.

Emails are the easiest form of communication, but they also have the least impact. Advocacy groups, including Partnership for Children, make it easy to communicate with legislators by providing form emails that you can send at key junctures in the political process. Whenever possible, take a few moments to personalize these emails by discussing your job, your volunteer work, or your personal experience with the issue. If the choice is between ending an email or taking no action at all—send the email! Many legislative offices count the number of emails they receive supporting or opposing a particular issue.

### **Tips for Writing an Effective Letter/Email:**

- Send your letter in time to affect the legislator's decision. **Don't put it off!**
- Make sure your letter can be clearly read. (Type or print neatly by hand).
- Be brief. Address one issue. Say exactly what you're asking them to do. Be sincere and polite in your tone and avoid negativity aimed at the legislator.
- Include a brief statement on the subject and the bill number at the beginning of the letter. Because hundreds or thousands of bills are introduced each session, it is impossible for individual legislators to track all of them.
- Introduce yourself and tell why you are personally interested in or concerned about this issue or bill.
- Give a personal anecdote about how the bill will affect you, your family, community, business, job, school, etc.
- Provide some facts or data to support your position.
- Indicate that you look forward to hearing from the legislator on this issue.
- Express your appreciation to the legislator for considering your position.
- Sign your full name, address, and phone number so that the legislator or staff can follow up with you.

*Continued . . .*

#### **Sources:**

- Kansas Action for Children. "Advocacy Toolkit." <http://www.kac.org/kac.aspx?pgID=891>
- Citizens' for Missouri Children. "Speak out for Missouri's Children."

## **Sample Letter/Email to Legislators**

March 12, 2008

The Honorable Nancy DoGood  
201 W Capitol Ave.  
Jefferson City, MO 65101

Always address letters & email in the proper format, including the date and using "The Honorable" as the proper title for any elected official.

Dear Representative DoGood,

As a kindergarten teacher in the Kansas City Missouri School District, I'd like to thank you for all of your past support for investments in our young children. I'm writing today to ask for your support in the Family Services Committee for House Bill 2264, which was heard last week and could be brought up for a vote tomorrow.

HB 2264 will help more low-income children and families access high quality early childhood programs that they currently cannot afford. Every day in my kindergarten classroom I see some children already falling behind their peers. By waiting until kindergarten, we are missing out on the most formative stage of a child's developing mind. Studies show that 90% of a child's brain develops before the age of 5, yet many parents do not have all the resources they need to help these young minds grow to their fullest potential during these early years.

House Bill 2264 has strong bi-partisan support in the House and is vital to improving educational success in Missouri. I know you have been a great advocate for children in the past, and I hope you will continue to advance these issues by supporting the bill in committee. Thank you for your consideration and I hope to hear from you on this very important issue.

Sincerely yours,

Ms. Effective Advocate  
3700 Child Advocacy Way  
Kansas City, MO 64108