

## Write to Ride

### **How to write a letter to Your Lawmaker**

It takes only a few minutes to write a letter, but those few minutes can make a big difference. When members of the House of Representatives or US Senate received enough letters on a particular issue, it does influence their vote. Unless they hear from you, many legislators may not be aware of how strongly their constituents feel about a particular issue. Your words can sway them and help them to understand why an issue is important to the folks back home. Here are some suggestions on what will give your letter the greatest impact:

### **User your own words and your own stationary:**

A handwritten or neatly typed letter is best, so long as it is legible. Form letters, photocopies, and preprinted postcards are of very limited value.

### **Be concise:**

A one-page letter is more likely to be read than one that is longer.

### **Personalize your message:**

People tend to remember a good story, and one told from the heart is better than shock effect. Let your lawmaker know why the issue matters in your life.

### **Mention your involvement in local organizations and groups:**

If it's pertinent. It is less important to mention affiliation with national conservation organizations like the National Wildlife Federation.

### **Identify your subject clearly:**

If possible, refer to legislation either by its bill number or by its popular name, such as the Clean Water Act.

### **Discuss only one issue in your letter:**

For example, avoid mentioning takings and superfund reauthorization in the same correspondence. This ensures that your letter will be seen by the right staff member.

### **Ask the lawmaker to do something specific:**

For example, ask him or her to vote for a particular amendment, request hearings or cosponsor a bill.

### **Ask for a reply to your requests and questions.**

### **Be sure to include a return address on your letter.**

### **If you have time, avoid sending your letter by fax or e-mail:**

Most Congressional offices pay more attention to letters that arrive by mail.