

Write Your Legislator

Several times throughout the year the Association of Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts, through an Action Alert, will request you to contact the Governor, Illinois legislators, U.S. Senators or members of the U.S. Congress. Your prompt action may be the difference between success or failure on an issue.

Elected officials are responsive to the opinions of their constituents. Although direct contact is sometimes necessary, letters are still the best channel of communication when voicing concern on legislative issues. Letters that are thoughtful and sincere on issues that directly affect the writer get the most attention.

The following are some points and guidelines to keep in mind when writing your legislators.

How to Address Letters . . .

When writing to a State Senator When writing to a State Representative When writing to the Governor

The Honorable John Doe The Honorable Jane Doe The Honorable Jim Jones

State Senator State Representative Governor

State House State House State of Illinois

Springfield, IL 62706 Springfield, IL 62706 Springfield, IL 62706

Dear Senator Doe: Dear Representative Doe: Dear Senator Doe:

When writing to a Member of the U.S. Congress When writing to a U.S. Senator

The Honorable John Doe The Honorable Jane Doe

U.S. House of Representatives U.S. Senate

Address Address

Illinois or Washington, D.C. Illinois or Washington, D.C.

Dear Representative Doe: Dear Senator Doe:

Fundamental "Do's" . . .

- **Specifically ask for support of your position.**
- Address your legislator properly.
- Write legibly (handwritten letter are fine if they are readable.)
- Be brief, to the point and discuss only one issue in each letter. Try to identify a bill by number and title.
- If possible, give an example of how legislation will affect you personally.
- Use your own words and your own stationary. If you are writing as an organization, use the organization's stationary.
- Include your address and sign your name legibly. If you have any family, business, or political connection in regard to an issue, explain it.
- Be courteous and reasonable.
- **Write your legislator when they do something of which you approve. Often, legislatures hear only from individuals and organizations who are against something. It is refreshing for a legislature to receive something positive instead of something negative all the time.**

Fundamental "Don'ts" . . .

- Do not send a postcard.
- Do not sign and send a form letter.
- Do not begin on a righteous note ("As a citizen and a taxpayer" and /or "As a concerned citizen"). Legislators realize you pay taxes and you are a citizen.
- Do not apologize for writing and taking their time. If your letter is short and expresses an opinion, they are happy to give it consideration.
- Do not be rude or threatening.
- Do not send a copy of your letter to other legislators. Write each one individually.

Remember to send a copy of your letter to the AISWCD Office - - we need to be kept informed!