

Lobbying by Letter

Letters are an important, even critical, way to influence legislation. Letters to the writer's own Senator and Assembly Member are especially important. In this day and age of instant information, most legislators and staff prefer to receive information through a hard-copy letter.

Here are some helpful guidelines:

- TAKE THE TIME TO QUICKLY CRAFT A KEY MESSAGE -- it doesn't have to be perfect, or entirely original (expanding on a message from a group's action alert is fine).
- Remember, your key message should answer the following questions: who you are, what is your issue, why you care, why your legislator should care, and what you want them to do about it.
- If possible, write in your own words and include your own thoughts: tell how the legislation will affect you and others like you.
- Show as much knowledge as you can, but don't worry if you're not an expert: Your personal experience is the best testimony that you can offer.
- Avoid sending form letters, but if you send one, be sure to personalize it with a hand-written note.
- Don't threaten, browbeat, or get nasty. A letter with personal attacks will result in a negative image for your cause.
- Write briefly, on one subject at a time, and refer to bills by name and number.
- Make sure that your main message (Support AB 1234 or Oppose SB 5678) is clearly stated within the first two sentences of your letter.
- If possible, keep your letter to a single page.
- If you are writing on behalf of an organization, be sure to write your letter on the organization's letterhead.
- If you ask a question and don't get a reply, follow up with another letter asking politely, but clearly for a response.
- When a legislator votes as you asked, send a thank-you note.

In short, an effective letter would deliver your key message and include:

Who you are

I am a voter in your district, and I belong to the 350-member Association of California Almond Growers.

Your brief description of your issue/legislation

I am writing to ask your support of Assembly Bill 1234 when it comes before your Committee. This bill would require all school lunch programs to include almonds with every meal

Why you care

Children often do not always choose healthy eating options for lunch at school. By including almonds with all school lunches, children will have a better likelihood of developing healthier eating habits.

Why they should care

Almonds can be an appealing and cost-effective way to meet the nutrition needs of children, while at the same time support one of California's key agricultural crops.

Who else supports this issue

This bill is supported by a broad coalition of almond growers, nutrition advocacy groups, school officials, and Blue Diamond.

Reinforce your ask

Please support providing healthy eating options for California's school children, by voting for AB 1234 in Committee.

Your name, address, and telephone number

If you have any questions, or need any additional information, please contact me at...

Letters should be sent directly to Sacramento, and may be addressed:

Senator _____

Assembly Member _____

State Capitol

State Capitol

P.O. Box 942848

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Sacramento, CA 94248-0001

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