

Writing Letters To Your Legislator

Five-Minute Letter

An effective letter to your State Legislator needs three things:

1. **Put your name and address at the end of your letter AND on the envelope**, so your legislator knows that you are one of their constituents.
2. **Ask for specific action**, using the sentence below or your own words: Please support Senate/House Bill # that [explain what it does].
3. **Give reasons why**. Use the talking points sheet or look at the OCCV HT Resource Guide to gather facts. Make sure there is ALWAYS a reliable source. Stay POSITIVE and Christianly in your tone and messaging.

You are now ready to send your letter!

*Look at <http://www.leg.state.or.us/findlegsltr/> for your legislator by entering in your address.

Sen. _____
900 Court St NE, _____
Salem, OR 97301

Rep. _____
900 Court St NE, _____
Salem, OR 97301

Sample Letter

Date

Dear Rep. _____ or Dear Sen. _____,

As a person of faith (Christian), I believe that it is my responsibility to ask you to do whatever you can to aid and end human trafficking in Oregon by supporting the passage of House Bill 3623.

- Fact(s) around the HB 3623. Make sure to quote your sources!
- You are a Christian and (optional) writing as a member of OCCV (*the benefit of this is that it might help you to get published more if you are representing a larger group*)
- Scripture or theology for why you are supporting HB 3623
- Personal story or how you became concerned about this issue.

Sincerely,

Your Name & Your Address

Writing Letters to the Editor

Letters to the Editor (LTEs) are an effective tool for communicating to a wide audience, influencing public opinion on an issue, and the best part is that they are free!

Here are some facts and tips for writing your letter:

- Keep your letter to 150 words or less
- Include your name and all current contact information (phone, email, and mailing address – they will not publish your letter without this information)
- All submissions are subject to editing, including for clarity, accuracy, grammar, length and libel concerns.
- You may submit one item for publication every 60 days.
- Be sure to check your facts and include them
- Stories are always moving – make it personal
- Focus on the positive

Here is a sample letter you can re-write in your own words:

Dear Editor,

- Fact(s) around the HB 3623. Make sure to quote your sources!
- Why you are supporting HB 3623
- You are a Christian and (optional) writing as a member of OCCV (the benefit of this is that it might help you to get published more if you are representing a larger group)
- Scripture or theology that is foundational for why you are supporting HB 3623
- Personal story or how you became concerned about this issue.

[Your Name, City]

Please send your letter(s) to:

The Oregonian

Mail: 1320 S.W. Broadway, Portland, OR 97201

Email: letters@news.oregonian.com via electronic mail.

Fax: (503) 294-4193.

Post Online: <http://www.oregonlive.com/opinion/> Click on “Write my letter now” under “My Opinion”, and sign in or register.

The Statesman Journal *Up to 200 words.

http://community.statesmanjournal.com/tools/sendmailforms/letters_to_the_editor.php

How To Testify Before a Legislative Committee

Adapted from the State Legislature Website

Committees are the heart of Oregon's legislative process. The committee process provides legislators more opportunity to closely study a measure than would be possible in a floor debate. Committees may hear from many people who support or oppose the measure.

Giving public testimony before a legislative committee can be an exciting and fulfilling experience if you are prepared.

Your testimony may influence the committee's action. It also becomes part of the permanent record and may be used in future research.

Listed below are suggestions to help make your presentation successful.

- **Know Your Audience**

The members of the committee are "citizen legislators." They care that you have taken time out of your day to come and testify before them.

- Be respectful.
- Don't accuse committee members of causing your particular problem.
- Resist the temptation to scold, put down, or insult the decision makers or other witnesses. This tactic will likely alienate them from your cause.

- **Know the Issue**

Support your personal opinions with as many facts as possible. Be knowledgeable of the "other side of the story." You may be asked to discuss the differences. Draw from your own knowledge and experience.

- **Be Familiar with the Committee Process**

- Know the location of the building, the meeting room, and the meeting time.
- Agendas will be posted outside the meeting room. Check to make sure the measure you are interested in has not been removed from the agenda. The measures may not be heard in the printed order.
- If possible, attend a committee meeting before you testify to become familiar with the process and room layout.
- When you arrive at the meeting, sign the witness registration sheet. Witnesses are not necessarily called in chronological order.

- **Presenting Your Written Testimony**

1. When you are called to testify, give copies of your testimony to committee staff before you begin your presentation. The number of copies requested is printed on the bottom of the committee meeting agenda.
2. Begin your presentation by addressing the chairperson first, then members of the committee. **"Chair___, members of the committee . . ."**
3. For the record, state your name, address, and the organization or group you represent.
4. State whether you support or oppose the legislative measure being heard and briefly explain. Do not read your testimony to the committee word for word. Prepare an outline.
5. Keep in mind you may have a ten minute version of your testimony--be prepared to summarize it in one minute--that may be all the time you are allowed!
6. Thank the committee members and offer to answer any questions. **"Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions."**

7. When a member asks you a question respond: "**Chair _____ , Senator/Representative (state name), the answer to your question is . . .**"
8. Relax! The members understand that this can be an intimidating experience--they don't expect a perfect presentation.
 - **Group Testimony**
 - Select several people to cover different topics so the testimony is not repetitive.
 - Address the problem, possible solutions, and your group's best solution.

Special Needs

If you require special accommodation in order to testify before a committee, please contact the committee administrator or support staff 24 hours BEFORE the meeting with your request.

Contact Numbers: (503) 986-1813 or (503) 986-1187

TDD (503) 986-1467 (inside Salem)

1-800-332-2313 (outside Salem)

If you need information regarding the legislative process, email the [Legislative Liaison](#), or call 503-986-1000.