

## Guidelines for Writing a Letter to Your Representative

**Identify Yourself as a Constituent** - Put your name and complete address on both the envelope and the letter so they know that you live in their district.

**Use Proper Forms of Address** - Address your lawmaker as “The Honorable.” Also, be sure to get their title correct, e.g. Senator, Representative, Assembly Member. Use “The Honorable” in the address and the office title in the salutation (Dear Senator Smith).

**Be Brief and Simple** - Keep your letter to no more than two pages. Try to stay on one page. In the first paragraph, state your purpose and what you want. Avoid the temptation to be comprehensive in explaining the legislation and making all possible arguments.

**State (and Repeat) Your Position** - Make your position and/or request clear in both your opening and closing paragraphs. Be specific. State what action you want. If you want to advance a piece of legislation, say so. If you want to know the legislator’s stand on an issue, ask what it is. If you want support on a particular issue, request it and a response.

**Personalize Your Message** - A personal letter is much more effective than a form letter. While form letters, postcards, and petitions are read and counted, they don’t carry the weight of a personalized, individual letter.

**Be Polite and Avoid Ultimatums or Rudeness** - Everyone responds better to praise than criticism. Threats and ultimatums do little to convince a legislator to adopt your position.

**Do Not Enclose Additional Material** - Additional reports or newspaper articles are rarely read or filed. If you have a particularly useful resource, mention it in your letter and offer to provide a copy upon request.

**Do Not Exaggerate or Lie** - Stick to your facts and experiences. Stories or facts fabricated to prove your point only run the risk of undermining your credibility.

**Make Your Message Timely** - Don’t procrastinate. Your letter is not helpful if it arrives after a vote. Be aware of the legislative process (is the bill in committee or coming up for a vote on the floor) and time your letter accordingly. Faxes can allow you to get your letter to a legislator at critical junctures in the process.

*Fighting Hunger, Feeding Hope*

**FOOD BANK**

Community **FOOD BANK** of Eastern Oklahoma



1304. N. Kenosha Ave. | Tulsa, OK 74110 | (918) 585-2800 | [www.cfbeo.org](http://www.cfbeo.org)