

Hi, this is Chris Micheli with the Sacramento Governmental Relations firm of Aprea & Micheli and an Adjunct Professor at McGeorge School of Law. Today's podcast is a quick look at drafting effective advocacy letters for bills and resolutions before the Legislature or Congress.

The first suggestion is, if you're a constituent identify yourself as such. Most politicians feel quite compelled to respond to constituent mail versus out of district mail. Second tip is, try to be brief and pretty simple. Keep the letter to just a page, or two at the very most, and be direct and remember to request what action you want them to take.

The third is to speak clearly your position in the opening paragraph and probably even in the closing paragraph. The next tip is to try and personalize your letter. Try to avoid using form letters with just a change or two. Personalized letters carry much more weight with elected officials and their staff. Explain how legislation would impact you, or your business, or your area.

Next, always be polite. Don't be rude. No threats. As you can imagine, politicians respond better to praise than to criticism. Rudeness does little to create the change that you might desire.

Try not to enclose additional material. This information is usually rarely read unless there's a particular study or some other resource that you are directing their attention to. Never exaggerate or lie. Stick to the facts and your own personal experiences only.

Make sure that your letter is delivered in a timely fashion. For example, not after the bill has already been voted upon. Try and submit your letter to those who also might be similarly impacted. Try to get other groups to sign on or send similar letters.

Certainly, send a copy of your letter to any other members of the committee, for example, and then acknowledge any response that you may get from the elected official and his or her staff. I hope you write effective advocacy letters and appreciate some of these general tips. Thanks for joining.