

Communicating by Letter

Letters are one of the time-tested ways to communicate with legislators. Keep the following guidelines in mind when drafting letters:

- Computer-generated or typewritten letters are easier to read.
- Use your own words and refer to your personal expertise and experience when appropriate. A study conducted by the Congressional Management Foundation, which interviewed congressional staffers, concluded that thoughtful, personalized constituent messages have more influence than a large number of identical form messages.
- Target a specific piece of legislation whenever possible, and reference the bill number and title in your correspondence. To maximize effectiveness, write to your legislators in the chamber (House of Representatives or Senate) in which the legislation is being introduced.
- Be clear and concise. Address and discuss only one issue in each letter. Congressional staffers review hundreds of letters each week; covering an issue in short, concise paragraphs will help your effectiveness.
- Know your facts. Providing inaccurate or biased data will damage your credibility, as well as that of ABC, and it can diminish your ability to influence future issues.
- Explain how the bill or issue affects you and your business, and how it would affect the construction industry in your district or state. If possible, provide anecdotal examples. An issue's effect on local constituents and businesses will make your letter stand out.
- Be courteous and respectful. If your legislators' positions contradict your own, acknowledge their views and state why you disagree.
- Be constructive. If a bill or proposed solution is off the mark, offer alternatives or suggestions, in addition to your opinion. Contact your RPM or grassroots@abc.org for official ABC positions. *See Appendix A for a sample letter to Congress*

Appendix.A: Sample Letter to Congress

Dear Senator _____:

As the [TITLE] of [COMPANY NAME] located in [CITY, STATE], I am writing to strongly urge you to oppose S. 1041, the Employee Free Choice Act of 2007. Despite its title, this legislation does nothing to advance freedom in the workplace.

Instead, the bill would strip America's workers of the right to a private ballot election when voting whether or not to join a union, and would replace the private ballot with a scheme called card check. Under card check, workers would have to vote by signing a card in public, inviting intimidation and coercion into the process.

The bill also would allow the federal government to dictate a company's contract terms with the union, such as determining wages and benefits, if collective bargaining was unsuccessful after a short time.

S. 1041 tramples on both the privacy of individual workers and the freedom of employers to bargain collectively. It would be a disaster for my employees, and for my business. Please do not let S. 1041 pass the Senate.

Sincerely,

[Your Name Here]