

# Strategic Tactic Guide: Letter to an Elected Official

**Strategic Value:** Just as they do with calls, elected officials and staffers log every letter that comes into the office. They use these logs to help determine how their constituents are feeling about particular issues. However, letters are more permanent and expansive than calls. **Letters are strategic when we need to highlight personal stories from folks directly affected by the issue.**

Writing a letter gives you a chance to share your personal stake in an issue. Whether it is to persuade an elected official who is on the fence, or provide political cover for a supportive politician, letters are a simple way to attach a name and a story to a broad issue.

## Logistics:

- Look up your elected official's office address here. Record this information somewhere handy.
- Offices usually also list their fax number. If you have access to a fax machine, this is a great way to get your letter in quickly if you are up against a fast-approaching vote.
- You can also email your letter. This is a great option for quick actions and fast timelines.
- If you have a longer timeline to work with, mail your letter in. It is more personal that way, and supports the U.S. Postal Service.
- Always include a return address and telephone number so the office can follow up with you.

**How-to:** These are the main points you should hit in your letter:

1. **Introduction** (*Salutation and one to two sentences*)
  - Address the letter using the elected official's title (Ex.: Dear Sen. Brown)
  - Introduce yourself as a resident of the elected official's jurisdiction.
  - There is power in organized groups. If applicable, introduce yourself as part of an organized group, like a local Working America committee.
  - Directly reference the issue you are writing about.
2. **Story** (*two to five sentences*)
  - Describe a situation that you or someone you are close to experienced, and use concrete details.
  - Describe how this experience affected your life.
  - Connect this experience to the broader community. Feel free to use a statistic from our issue one-pagers to help make this point.
3. **Specific Ask** (*one to two sentences*)
  - Ask your elected official to take a concrete action. You can ask them to vote for or against a specific bill, ask their colleagues to support or oppose a piece of legislation, or make a statement opposing an executive order.
4. **Closing** (*one to two sentences*)
  - If you'd like, request a return call or letter with information about the elected official's position on the issue or the result of how they voted (if applicable).
  - Be sure to include your name and contact information if you ask for a response.

**Example Letter:**

Dear Congresswoman Smith,

I am a proud resident of Springfield and a member of the Springfield Working America Committee. I am writing to you today to ask you to vote against repealing the Affordable Care Act.

I am a single mom of two young children. To provide for my family, I run a child care center out of my home. There is never a dull moment with five children running around! Because of Medicaid expansion, last year was the first year of my adult life that I had insurance. It was such a relief to know that if I got sick, I would be able to get the treatment that I needed without going bankrupt. Phasing out Medicaid expansion or switching over to a block grant system would hurt single moms like me.

I am urging you to vote against the American Health Care Act. Medicaid expansion has worked, and we need to keep it firmly in place.

Please call or write me back with information about your position on this important issue.

Thank you,  
Kim McMurray  
123 Main St.  
Springfield, Ill. 97477  
773-883-0464

**After the letter:** Organize!

Build on this letter by organizing folks you know to send more letters into the office. Remember, letters are about connecting names and stories to the issue.

- Post your letter on social media. Take a picture of the letter or transcribe it in a post. Ask folks to share it.
- Reach out directly to folks with similar stories. Ask them to write letters. If they have never written a letter before, offer to meet up for coffee (or stop by their home, cubicle, etc.) and walk them through it.
- Host a letter-writing party at your home.