

Writing Tips – Letters of Support

Every letter received by your senator and representative is very important to them. Writing your senator or representative is another example of democracy at work, allowing us all to have a voice in how our country is run. You may not think that just one letter can make a difference, but even one letter could be the ‘one’ that sways an opinion or vote. Some representatives lose touch with the issues—a letter from a constituent will inform them of the political climate back home. They may realize that by not supporting one bill they may lose many votes.

Writing a letter of support is relatively simple. It is important to remember that legislative assistants receive thousands of letters and only have a fraction of time to read them, so it is very important that the letter is clear, concise and to the point.

1. Read the entire piece of legislation—pick out parts of the bill that you believe are important for later reference.
2. Before you compose the letter ask and answer some simple questions:
 - a. Why am I writing this letter?
 - b. What is the goal of this letter?
 - c. How does this legislation affect me?
3. Compose a first draft—make it clear and easy to understand.
 - a. Begin with how HCV has affected you:
 1. Use your own voice:
 1. Example: “As a person living with hepatitis C”, “As an African American living with hepatitis C”, “As a parent of someone living with hepatitis C”, “As a friend of someone with hepatitis C.” It should be passionate but the introduction should not ramble or become a ‘pity party.’
 - b. Introduce the legislation—This can also be the first line of your letter.
 1. Example: “Please vote **YES** on **H.R. 3539**, the Hepatitis C Epidemic Control and Prevention Act...”
 2. Example: “.....I would like to encourage you to support **H.R. 3539**, the **Hepatitis C Epidemic Control and Prevention Act**.....”
 - c. Discuss the importance of the bill and how it can affect needed change.
 1. Example: “Hepatitis C is the most common blood-borne infection in the United States. Approximately **4 million Americans** have been exposed to hepatitis C. This bill will help to address the hepatitis C epidemic.....”

2. Example: “It is estimated that approximately 4 million Americans have been exposed to hepatitis C yet only about 20% of those infected know they have hepatitis C. This bill will help to heighten awareness and provide services enabling people to seek care, which will save lives and reduce future medical costs.”
 3. Restate your objective:
 1. Example: Please vote **YES** on **H.R. 3539**, the Hepatitis C Epidemic Control and Prevention Act. If you would like to discuss this issue with me, please call me at ...”
 - d. Use only approved statistics and facts that have been issued by governmental sources (see below).
 - e. Once a draft is written walk away from the letter—come back to it with a clear mind.
 - f. Let the second draft sit (overnight if necessary) and proof it the next day.
 - g. Use spell and grammar check!
 - h. Ask a member of the family, friend or business acquaintance to review the letter for content, grammar and punctuation.
 - i. Don’t be afraid to rewrite or edit as necessary.
4. Handwritten or typed letters carry the most weight. Mail a hard copy of the letter to your representative and send a copy via email and fax.
 5. Make a follow-up call to your representative and encourage her or him to support the bill.

Hepatitis C Facts

- ▶ It is estimated that 4 million Americans have been exposed to hepatitis C. Of these nearly 3 million Americans are chronically infected.
- ▶ 1.8% of Americans have been exposed to hepatitis C.
- ▶ 3.1% of African Americans have been exposed to hepatitis C.
- ▶ 2.1% of Hispanic Americans have been exposed to hepatitis C.

- ▶ There are approximately 35,000 new infections of hepatitis C each year.
- ▶ 8,000 to 10,000 Americans die each year of complications from hepatitis C. This number is expected to triple by the year 2010.
- ▶ Hepatitis C is the most common blood-borne infection in the United States.
- ▶ Hepatitis C is the most common reason for liver transplantation.
- ▶ Health care costs are expected to soar unless measures are taken to screen and manage people with hepatitis C.