

Letter writing campaign

Consistent with our theme “democracy and dissent,” students will be encouraged to (politely) dissent by writing a letter to an elected (or public) official and requesting a policy change. The letter must be well-researched and fully cited. You will be encouraged to draw from journal discussions in order to identify a topic ((1000 words)).

Students will exchange letter drafts for editing and evaluation online; the evaluation will then be sent to the author and the instructor. Your portfolio, which should include the first draft, evaluation, and final draft, is due on April 2nd. The mark breakdown is as follows:

Draft: 5%

Evaluation of others’ drafts (“feedback”): 5%

Final Draft (due 2nd): 20%

Ways to write a letter to a public official

- [here are some tips from the Union of Concerned Scientists](#)
- [here is a resource from the University of Kansas](#)

Public officials usually know what lobbying groups are saying about an issue, but often they do not understand how a decision might affect you. A well-written letter describing your experiences, observations, and opinions may change an official's mind. The same guidelines are also useful for writing to private officials such as business owners, executives of groups like the chamber of commerce, or presidents of corporate boards of directors. These individuals can also make decisions that affect you or the public.

You can write two types of letters — positive or negative. A positive letter explains why a decision is or would be good. You should write positive letters about favorable decisions. A negative letter explains your opposition to a pending decision. Here is one way to format the letter:

- Decide whom you will write
- Open the letter
- Write something about yourself
- Summarize your understanding of the issue (or decision) being considered
- Tell why you think the decision should occur - using well-cited information
- Tell what any changes mean to you personally
- Acknowledge any past support
- Describe what action you hope the official will take
- If you have written a letter that opposes some action, offer an alternative
- If you have time and you are committed, ask how you can help
- Close your letter
- Sign the letter