



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE HEAD INJURY ADMINISTRATORS

Tips on Contacting/Writing Members of Congress

As a citizen, you may fax, e-mail, or call your U.S. Senator, U.S. Representative, or any other member of Congress who may influence your areas of interest, such as being a key member of an important committee. Due to security issues, it is strongly recommended that individuals either fax or e-mail their Congressional delegation in lieu of writing letters (snail mail). You may need to use personal stationery, if you fax or attach a document to an e-mail, which does not reflect your position in State government, and use your personal e-mail account as opposed to your State government e-mail. Should you choose to call, you should ask for the staff person who handles disability or health related issues. Most members have on their webpage a page to enter your comments, along with other information directly (e.g., name, address, zip, phone). It may be helpful to formulate your comments ahead of time so that you can insert them directly to the page. Your comments should reflect the pointers below.

Pointers for Calls and Correspondence:

1. Include your address/phone/e-mail so the office holder may respond to you.
2. Keep your message short and to the point. It is best to address a single topic or issue.
3. In general, your communication should specifically:
 - a. Say who you are (anonymous letters will not have any credibility), State any credentials you may have;
 - b. Say why you are writing;
 - c. What you want the legislator to do (e.g., support, oppose, co-sponsor, contact the assigned committee, etc.);
 - d. Refer to the bill name, number, committee assignment, and current status, if applicable;
 - e. Why you want the legislator to take the position; provide factual, not emotional information; how the topic affects you or others in your State;
 - f. Keep it simple;
 - g. Close by requesting action you want taken;
 - h. Express your appreciation, and willingness to be contacted for further information, if appropriate.
4. Letters/e-mails, which are courteous, to the point and include specific supporting examples are the best correspondence.
5. Remember to ask friends and family members to contact their legislators too.

Addressing Members of Congress

Addresses should be used in e-mail messages, as well as those sent through the Postal Service. However, it is advised not to send through the Postal Service, as all mail delivery must be checked and will take time. To find the address/e-mail for your Senators, go to:

https://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm.

House Members: <https://writerep.house.gov/writerep/welcome.shtml>

Format:

To Your Senator:

The Honorable (full name)
(Room #)
(Name) Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

To Your Representative:

The Honorable (full name)
(Room #) (Name) House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

Never:

1. Use vulgarity, profanity, or threats. The first two are just plain rude and the third one can get you a visit from the Secret Service. Simply stated, don't let your passion get in the way of making your point.
2. Fail to include your name and address, even in email letters.
3. Demand a response.

Identifying Legislation:

House Bills: "H.R._____"

House Resolutions: "H.RES._____"

House Joint Resolutions: "H.J.RES._____"

Senate Bills: "S._____"

Senate Resolutions: "S.RES._____"

Senate Joint Resolutions: "S.J.RES._____"

II. Support & Follow Up

When contacting your representative or senators, it may be helpful to have on hand information that provides an overview of the prevalence and incidence of TBI, a description of needs, current service delivery, and how federal TBI issues have impacted your State. Staff may ask questions regarding the status of programs and TBI in your State. You may want to offer to research and provide additional information should staff ask questions for which you do not have answers readily available.

It is IMPORTANT to keep NASHIA informed of your communication with members of Congress. If you have questions concerning State or Federal policies or want to become more involved, please contact Susan Vaughn, Director of Public Policy, at publicpolicy@nashia.org. You may also use information posted on the website: www.nashia.org.

NASHIA is assisting State government in promoting partnerships and building systems to meet the needs of individuals with brain injury and their families.