

FSM 122 - Public Policy Letter to Your Legislator

Due Tuesday 2/11/20

You will select a public policy issue to research and individually write a letter to your legislator. Select a public policy issue, research the public policy issue, provide any necessary background information, and state your opinion on the issue and the reason(s) for your opinion in your letter. It is important to understand which issues are relevant to the US Congress (Medicare, FDA, USDA Farm Bill, WIC, SNAP, etc.) and which issues are relevant to a state legislator (licensure in CA, California Dept of Education, CA schools, etc.) and to write to the correct individual for your specific issue.

You will specifically write about a health or food/nutrition-related bill that is before Congress (CA or US). This cannot be a bill that has already been passed! Also, it should not be reviewed with potential for passing before this assignment's due date.

Below are some resources:

1. If you select a federal issue: search for or track federal bills on <http://www.govtrack.us>
2. If you select a state issue: search for or track state bills on <http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov>
3. The Academy's "Advocacy" page (AND members only) <http://www.eatrightpro.org/resources/advocacy>
4. Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) <http://www.cspinet.org/> and <https://www.cspinet.org/takeaction/#>
5. American Heart Association, American Diabetes Association, etc. all have "Advocacy" alerts and topics appropriate to their organizations.

How to find your legislators:

- California State Legislators: <http://findyourrep.legislature.ca.gov>
- US Representatives: <http://www.house.gov/>
- US Senators: https://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm?State=CA

Writing your letter:

1. The letter should be addressed to one of your legislators; someone who can affect the outcome of the issue. Use formal titles on letter and on the envelope.
2. The letter will be a printed hard copy that is signed by you and ready to be mailed in a properly addressed and stamped envelope (Do not seal!).
3. The letter has your return address where you are registered to vote.... or at least corresponds to the representative to whom you are writing. If you're registered to vote at home, don't use your college return address. If you're registered to vote here in Davis, don't use your family home address. If you're not registered to vote, you still have to do the assignment. (If you're not registered to vote, then now is the time to register).
4. Federal legislator's (Senator/Representative) letters should be sent to their local, California-based US Senate office (not in DC).
5. Your letter should begin by stating the number and title of the bill or issue and then the action you want your legislator to take (vote yes/no). This will be followed by your position on the topic. Personalize it and support your argument concisely. Finally, thank your legislator for their consideration and sign your name below.
6. One page maximum, in most cases, single-spaced. You can attach references at the bottom or on a separate page.

7. The letter should be in business format, typed, signed by you, and paper-clipped to a **stamped** envelope properly addressed to the official. I will mail your letter after I've read it. Address the envelope in "business format" (can be hand-written) and use the individual's official title on the letter and envelope. Basic business letter formats:
https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/subject_specific_writing/professional_technical_writing/basic_business_letters/index.html

Overview write-up of your issue:

On a separate sheet of paper, turn in a brief overview of your issue including the following, numbered in this order:

1. The number and title of the bill (e.g., SB 219)
2. Source of your information (full, accessible URL)
3. Brief paragraph describing the issue
4. Who you wrote to and their formal title. Also include:
 - a. Why you wrote to this particular legislator
 - b. Does s/he have any influence on the issue? (sponsor of the bill, on a committee, etc.)
5. Which House it's in and its progress for one of the following:
 - a. Federal: Senate or House of Representatives
 - b. State: Senate or Assembly

The assignment is worth 25 points:

Letter & appropriate issue = 20 points

Overview write-up of your issue = 5 points

No signature, no stamp, no addressed envelope (-2 points each)

IMPORTANT:

- If you do not write an appropriate business letter as indicated above, your letter will be returned to you and you may re-submit; however, you will lose 5 points.
- If you write to the wrong legislator or the bill doesn't match the legislator, your letter will be returned to you and you may re-submit; however, you will lose 5 points