Writing Your Member of Congress

| | Washington Addresses for Members of Congress | |
|---|--|---|
| | The Honorable (name) U.S. Senate Washington, DC 20510 | The Honorable (name) House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515 |
| | Addresses for District Offices are listed in the telephone directory or on the internet at www.house.gov | |
|] | Write or type your letter personally Legible, handwritten letters are best. Mass-produced postcards are less effective. | |
|] | Include your name, address and phone number in the body of the letter You want to make sure that your legislator will know that you are a constituent and will respond. | |
|] | Be brief, but thoughtful and personal Share your knowledge and experience. Describe how the issue/legislation affects you or people you know, especially if they live in the same district or state. | |
|] | Be specific and confine the letter to one topic Cite the bill number or title and your position. Ask for a specific action by the legislator (e.g. voting or cosponsoring the bill.) | |
|] | Mention any groups or communities of which you are a part <i>There is power in numbers</i> . | |
| 1 | Be courteous and express appreciation for something positive that the legislator has done in the past | |
|] | Try to keep your letter to one page | |
| l | Ask for a response | |

The Parts of a Lobby Letter

600 Mazzuchelli Heights Los Angeles, CA August 12, 1995

The Honorable Diane Feinstein United States Senate Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Feinstein,

Speak to one bill or issue

Identify your groups

Explain your view

I am a member of St. Anthony Parish in Los Angeles and NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby. I am very concerned about the Dole/Packwood welfare reform bill. The Work Opportunity Act (S 1120) introduced in the Senate this month.

While the provisions of the Dole/Packwood proposal differ from many in the House-passed Personal Responsibility Act (HR 4), the bill is equally as devastating to people who are poor. Both HR 4 and S₄ 1120 fail to help people out of poverty.

I urge you to oppose this bill when it reaches the floor of the Senate for debate and vote in September. I know that you are supportive of a block grant approach, which is the main framework of this bill. Yet, I believe this type of approach will only cause more women and children to become destitute as well as have a major effect on the fiscal health of our state.

A block grant approach destroys essential safety net programs. They eliminate the structure of the of guaranteed support to those who qualify for the programs by virtue of their circumstances. Further, during an economic downturn, our state would not be given added funds to cover increased numbers of recipients. We would be forced to develop a waiting list, change the eligibility requirements, or raise taxes.

At St. Anthony's we run a food shelter. I volunteer there once a week. I have heard the stories of many women trying so hard to make it on the little money they receive from AFDC and food stamps. They are very concerned about what effect this legislation will have on their lives and the lives of their children. They tell me they want to work, but minimum wage does not cover the cost of child care and health insurance. They too are anxious for some way to get off of welfare and out of poverty. They see the Dole/Packwood bill getting them off of welfare, but causing them to go further into poverty.

Senator, your record in Congress shows that you have consistently supported programs that serve low-income Americans. The Dole/Packwood bill will hurt those whom you have consistently supported. Vote against the bill and continue to work for programs that truly help people out of poverty. I look forward to hearing back from you about this bill.

Sincerely,

Mary Kelly

Know the bill's status

Acknowledge your MOC's past work if possible

Share personal experience

Ask for a response

Be clear, concise & values-based