HOW TO WRITE YOUR LEGISLATORS

Legislatures have ranked from 1 to 8 the most effective ways to communicate with their offices:

1. Letters (both positive and negative)
2. E-mail
3. Small, well-planned group meetings or luncheons
4. Telephone (talk with aide first, holding call to three minutes)
5. Office visits if scheduled in advance through aide
6. Attending a speechmaking event or reception
7. Contacts during their visits home
8. Form letter, last-minute telegrams

When writing to your legislators: (Refer to Legislative Book for addresses)

☐ Make sure their name, title, room number, office building, city, state and zip code are correct
☐ Make your point clearly in the first paragraph; state the bill number and if you are for or against the issue.
☐ The letter should be no longer than one side of one page; attachments are acceptable. Your complete return address should be on the letter as well as the envelope.
☐ Expressions of general opinion are usually not treated with respect: i.e. the 99th Congress is doing a poor job.
☐ Write sincere, complimentary letters as often as you do letters of complaint.
☐ Form letters do not have the impact of a personal, individual comment.
☐ Make it your letter style. Be conversational.
☐ Be informed on both sides of the issue.
☐ Control emotions; be courteous rather than vindictive.
☐ When addressing legislators, avoid using “Honorable”. “Dear Senator Smith,” or “Dear Representative Smith,” is better.
☐ Always send a copy of your letter to the administrative aide or assistant.
March 26, 2001

Senator Thomas A. Daschle
317 Hart Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Daschle,

Your participation in acquiring funding for conservation is commendable. This funding will benefit conservation in South Dakota in a big way. We will have more money for more programs to fulfill our obligations.

Sincerely,

Your name goes here
Title goes here

cc: Administrative aide