

COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY WITH CONGRESS

How to send your messages:

- **Washington, D.C.:** If you are writing to a Member of Congress in his/her D.C. office, use email or fax, not U.S. mail. Since the Anthrax attack on the Capitol, all postal mail is screened and takes two weeks or more to reach the Members' offices.
- **District or State Offices:** If you write to a Representative and/or Senator in a district or state office you can use fax, email or U.S. mail. And note that messages to local offices are often more effective than those sent to D.C.

How to ensure that your message is read:

- **Identify yourself as a constituent:** Always include the name and address of your business, and provide an email or postal address to which they can reply.
- **Personalize your letter:** For example, tell them how long you've been in business, how many employees you have in the district/state, mention any previous contact you've had with the Member and/or staff.
- **Be specific about the issue:** Identify specifically and early in your message the issue about which you are writing; include a bill number if you know it. For example, "don't raise my taxes" has little meaning; "do not repeal LIFO" is a clear message.
- **Write once, about one issue:** Unless you have new or additional information to convey, do not write multiple times on the same issue. And limit each letter to one issue or closely related issues; discussing multiple issues will dilute your message.
- **Explain how the issue affects you:** Would the legislation make it necessary for you to cut jobs? Cancel a capital investment? Reduce payroll expenses? Drop health care coverage? Let them know that proposed legislation would have consequences.
- **Write original letters:** Do not use postcards or a form letter. Staff members reading the mail tend to disregard them if they receive multiple identical post cards or letters.

What Members you should contact:

You should write to the Representatives and Senators who represent your employees in every state and district where you have operations – where you employ their constituents and are a part of their economy. If you don't know who the Representative is from all your locations, go to NAW's website, www.naw.org and click on TELL CONGRESS in the top right corner of your screen. Follow simple instructions to get the names and addresses of each Representative.