



AVV's How To Write Your Congressman

Glenn Youngkin just became the new governor of Virginia, the mid-terms are around the corner, and the 2024 presidential election is on the horizon. Bringing about change through elections is one thing, but what should Veterans - and all Americans for that matter - be doing in the interim to make sure the country remains on course?

Elected officials are supposed to represent the interests and concerns of the people who elected them, but opinion polls suggest a disconnect between citizens and their law makers. Constituents can keep elected officials tethered to them through engagement - both to criticize and to encourage. Lacking any direction from constituents, legislators may instead follow loud fringe voices, or a detrimental party agenda.

A lot of people I know complain about the way things are, but when I ask whether they've written their congressmen about their concern, the answer is usually no – essentially because they never did it before and they don't know where to start. If this is you, the websites below are a great place to start:

- For Virginia General Assembly Members: <https://whosmy.viriniageneralassembly.gov>
- For the U.S. House of Representatives: <https://www.house.gov>.
- For the U.S. Senate: <https://www.senate.gov/senators>

These sites operate similarly – you enter your address or zip code, and your elected official is revealed. There's usually a link from there to contact your specific elected official. Once at the specific official's website, click on the "contact" link where you'll fill out a contact form - name, address, phone number, etc. Then there'll be a space for you to state your message, and specify whether you want a response to your concerns. You'll also find links nearby to subscribe to the officeholder's newsletters and e-mail updates.

Some tips on contacting your lawmaker via their website:

- Draft your message ahead of time and then copy and paste it into the space allotted at the website.
- Keep your message concise, fact-based, professional, and snark-free.
- Always request a response. This ensures that someone in the office read your message.
- Subscribe to the newsletters and e-mail updates. I use these to keep apprised of each official's political priorities and activities, and to provide critical or favorable feedback.

The telephone is another option and is especially useful when a vote is upcoming for your elected official. Call your legislator's office, identify yourself as a constituent, and state to the aide or staff member that you want it registered that in your opinion the legislator should do X or Y. You can find your legislators' phone numbers via the websites listed above.

In either case – website or telephone, legislator staff members are supposed to track the number of messages they receive on various topics, and these can help sway the thinking of



AVV's How To Write Your Congressman

lawmakers. I can tell you from experience that engaging your legislator makes you feel empowered, and is certainly more productive than yelling at the television and waving your fist.

Questions or comments sent to info@americanveteransvote.com