Writing a Letter to Your Legislator

Starting out

1) Consider the following questions: What change do you want to see? What message do you want to deliver? What, specifically, are you asking your legislators to do?

2) Do background research. Visit www.FreeSpeechForPeople.org and click on ‘Resources’ for more information. Also, for the latest news, visit the Free Speech For People Blog.

3) You might want to try and find out:
   - Statistics/Facts—has any relevant research been done which could support your case?
   - Who has done what. What actions have been taken by the government? By the opposition? By organizations who are passionate about the issue?
   - Any other interesting facts? Has there been a recent demonstration? Has the issue received any media attention?

4) Which politician? Make sure you address the letter to the right politician. Visit http://www.votesmart.org to find your legislators.

Writing the Letter

Language

Use formal language but remember you are expressing your point of view, so phrases like ‘I feel’ and ‘I want to see’ are good to include.

Be polite

Being abusive or offensive won’t do you any favors—you can be firm and state your case without being rude.

Layout

Contact details:
   - Include your name and contact details in the top right-hand corner of the page
   - Include their name and contact details underneath on the left-hand side of the page

Form of address:
   - Dear Representative, Senator, Formal Title
Introduction:
- State what the issue is
  - Example: I am concerned about the impact of the recent Supreme Court decision in Citizens United vs. FEC. Allowing corporations to spend unlimited amounts in our public elections jeopardizes our democracy.
- State what you want done about it
  - Example: To correct the damage the Supreme Court has done to the First Amendment, we need to pass a constitutional amendment of our own that puts people ahead of corporations.

Body:
- Focus on two or three main points which support your view. Use examples from your research as evidence.

Conclusion:
- Reiterate your view expressed in the introduction
- Pick one strong example from your letter to back up your point
- Ask for the politician to respond to your letter
- Conclude with a salutation, e.g. regards, yours sincerely