

## TIPS TO EMAIL YOUR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

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The way in which Congressional offices handle electronic communications has changed significantly in just the few years. ***Electronic communications allow Members of Congress to keep better track of constituent comments than had been previously possible with traditional letters or phone calls.*** One way in which Members do this, however, is to restrict ways in which constituents may send them electronic communications.

For instance, most Members of Congress have set up a web page where only their constituents can send them a message via what is called a web form, rather than use a typical e-mail address. This allows the Members to receive only comments from those they represent. Also, it only allows only original comments, not form messages, to get past the filters of the web program.

Most constituent emails receive a form email response that indicates that a mailed response will be forthcoming. However, about 1/3 of all congressional offices are now using email (rather than snail mail) to respond. That proportion will increase substantially over the next two or three years.

That being said, here are some special rules that pertain to electronically contacting your Member of Congress:

- ***E-mailing Your Member Counts!*** An electronic communication is potentially more effective than a letter or phone call because it allows the Member to keep better track of your comment. Go to <http://capwiz.com/mandcmp> to send an electronic comment to your Member. You can enter your Zip code to find out who your elected officials are and then send them individual emails. how to contact them electronically. Then, you can send your own message without leaving that website.
- ***Don't attempt to send electronic communications to Members of Congress who represent other Districts or States.*** They don't get read or answered. The same goes for sending an email message to all (or any large group of) Members of Congress
- ***Don't expect more than an "auto-responder" reply to your electronic communication.*** Most Members continue to reply by postal mail to all constituent comments, whether electronic or not. It may not be the informative, responsive letter you expected. Just remember that every communication does count.

**To learn more about how to effectively influence your Members of Congress by electronic or other forms of communication, contact**

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