

DOs AND DON'Ts IN WRITING STATE LEGISLATORS

The following “Dos” and “Don’ts” are suggestions for faculty in writing to their state legislators. In this regard, the best letters take the high road and talk the damage the budget cuts in recent years have done to the university and our ability to serve students and the state more generally. Complaining about personal issues, like your own salary, are generally not very effective. Also note, that individually crafted letters are always more effective than mass produced ones that you just need to sign and send. Therefore, please craft your own letter and let your state representatives know about the impacts of their decisions on our university.

DON'T: Use university letterhead – doing so is using university resources for political purposes and violates state ethics law.

DO: Identify yourself as a constituent and university employee. Use your home address.

DON'T: Just complain about your salary.

DO: Discuss harm to university of budget cuts, including loss of quality faculty, many fewer classes and class sections available to students (about 800 fewer system wide sections). Of course, this makes it difficult for students to get the classes they need and to graduate on time. Legislators care about students.

DON'T: Complain much about research limitations – they don’t care or understand much about research.

DO: Complain about loss of service to the public if this is appropriate for you and can give specific examples.

DON'T: Complain about the use of adjunct faculty. Some of them might be their constituents. As well, they don’t really care who is in the classroom as long as some competent person is there teaching the students.

DO: Complain about lost ability to do deferred maintenance if you can give specific examples.

DO: Complain about the loss of economic development activities caused by the budget cuts if you can give examples.

To find out the name and address of your state legislators, you can go to:

<http://vote-smart.org/>

and enter your nine digit zip code and you will get what you need.