

Date Printed: 06/16/2009

JTS Box Number: IFES_78
Tab Number: 108
Document Title: Speak Up!
Document Date: 1991
Document Country: United States -- General
Document Language: English
IFES ID: CE02850



* 6 B 7 6 0 C E 8 - 3 8 F D - 4 0 4 8 - 9 0 8 B - E 0 A 8 E 5 9 1 D 0 0 B *

SPEAK

**Making
Government
Work
For You.**
A Guide.

UP!

Speak

**Making
Government
Work
For You.
A Guide.**

up!

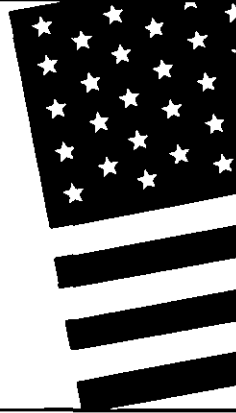


Copyright © 1981 by
Acorn Brook Corporation
Rumson, New Jersey 07760

All Rights Reserved

Orders: Acorn Brook Corp., P.O. Box 343, Rumson, NJ 07760 or Call (201) 842-6004

Introduction



Political power is not something that only elected officials, large organizations, and governments possess. You have it, too. It's the power to sway elected officials and affect government at every level: local, state, and national.

This booklet is designed to show you how to use that power most effectively, whether writing a letter to your congressman on a national issue or addressing your city council on a local zoning matter.

Very few of us ever use our political power, except in voting, and even there, rarely in overwhelming numbers. But ours is a government of the people, and the fundamental power to govern resides with us. We entrust the operation of government to our elected representatives. But if, as sometimes happens, they do things better left undone, or fail to do what should be done, it's up to us to let them know about it. In other words, *speak up!*

This can be as simple as offering your opinion at a meeting or writing to your congressman. (If you don't know who he is, call your local library or League of Women Voters' office.) Those are the basics, but exercising power effectively, like any other skill, takes some learning and practice. You need to know how the system works, because knowing what to say, to whom to say it, and when to say it, makes all the difference. Persistence and a willingness to follow up will enhance your chance of success.

We're not suggesting you'll always succeed, because in our form of government, the multitude of forces working on any issue insure that even politicians don't win all the time. But you can improve your chances, and, by participating actively, sharpen your talents for the next round.

There is one guarantee we can offer: if you remain silent, your point of view will never be considered, except, perhaps, by accident.

Why People Don't Speak Up

The "What's the use?" syndrome is responsible for much of the silence of the so-called Silent Majority. Most people are skeptical about whether an individual can be heard over the collective din of organized interests. Although it can be helpful to organize people of similar concerns, it isn't absolutely necessary. But it is necessary to speak up.

A group of ten thousand, speaking with a single voice, can command attention. But a hundred thousand individuals, speaking for themselves, can carry the day. Even without organizing formally, they are creating a potent force known as a consensus. They can't do it if they remain silent.

The "What's the use?" excuse operates under many other guises. Here are a few:

- **"Government is too big to be affected."**

Size is intimidating, and certainly government is becoming more complex and cumbersome daily, even at local and state levels. But the institutions of government can be broken down into smaller, more approachable pieces, beginning in your own neighborhood. Your local official, state legislator, and Federal representative can help you find your way around the corridors of power. It's their job, and being helpful is one of the things you pay them to do.

Furthermore, when you focus on one issue you'll find the monolithic face of government even more penetrable. There will usually be one or two bills that deal with your issue, specific agencies with jurisdiction over it, and certain key senators or representatives to contact about it. This is equally

true at the state and local level. Usually, the lower the level of government, the more accessible the officials will be, and the more impact you can have.

- **“But I didn’t vote for him.”**

Some people think that because they didn’t vote for an official (or didn’t vote at all) they have no right to speak up. First of all, many of our representatives were elected by a minority of the public. In many elections, voter turnout is only between 50 and 60 percent of the total electorate. Since typical results might find the winner garnering 51 percent of the vote to the loser’s 49 percent, many winners are therefore elected with the support of just 30 to 35 percent of all eligible voters.

But regardless of the turnout, there is a winner, and he is the representative of all the people in his district, not just those who voted for him. He doesn’t know whether you voted for him, and he probably doesn’t care. But he does care how you vote the next time. You have just as much right to let him know what you think as do the people who rang doorbells for him in the campaign.

- **“It’s too much work.”**

Involvement in politics can be a lot of work — or it can be as minimal as writing a letter to a congressman once or twice a year. If you think about trying to communicate with “The Government,” the prospect can seem overwhelming. The point to remember is that you won’t be communicating with the whole government, but with a few people — individuals who can be and frequently are influenced by reasoned and reasonable messages.

Elected Officials: More Accessible Than You Think

Don’t forget that most of our elected officials sincerely want to earn the public favor that will keep them in office. They need a constant flow of reassurance, information, and evidence of support, or lack of support, from their constituents. Effective performance depends on the ability to work from a position of strength, and a representative known to be

in trouble back home has considerably less negotiating room than a better-supported colleague.

In short, you *are* important to your representatives, and, if you speak up, you'll be using the power you have to influence them, and, in turn, to influence the process of government.

There are, of course, a number of formal processes by which agencies of government solicit public opinion. Two examples of these are legislative committee hearings and requests for public comment when radio and television stations' licenses are up for renewal. There are also many local opportunities for input.

But most public officials realize that these institutionalized methods of gathering information won't do the whole job, and that they need to be accessible to private citizens. They welcome and solicit contributions to their thinking, realizing that knowledgeable members of the public can be a valuable resource.

Again, local and state officials are often the most accessible — many have their home telephone numbers listed in the phone book — and even representatives and senators usually have one or more offices in their home districts. Many of them send questionnaires soliciting information, and they all follow their hometown newspapers carefully to stay abreast of public opinion.

Getting Started

If you are anxious to dash off a letter now, the first chapter, "A Quick Guide to Letter Writing," will get you started. It will give you basic tips on how to get your message across courteously and effectively, along with a sample letter you can use as a model.

The second chapter, "Fine Tuning," will help you polish your style, whether you're writing a letter, speaking at a meeting, or composing an Op-Ed piece for your local paper. Don't overlook the possibilities in local journalism. If you have a well thought out viewpoint, many small daily and weekly newspapers may give your opinion pieces a warm

welcome, as long as you don't beat a path to their door too frequently.

The third chapter, "How the System Works," will tell you more of what you need to know to be effective: how a bill becomes a law, who the key figures are in the bill's passage, and when your comments will be most effective. It will also help you decide who can help you best — whether to contact your state legislator or Federal representative to solve a personal problem with the government, for example.

In the last chapter, "Spreading the Word," we'll discuss recruiting support within your community to increase your clout.

Finally, in Appendix I you'll find a Federal directory to help you communicate directly with the agency or office that can help you the most.

In Appendix II, "Information Sources," you'll find a guide to helpful indexes and information services that should be readily available locally.

As you begin, remember that the power of government is in your hands, and you *can* make it work for you. Your opinion, communicated clearly and to the right person at the right time, will have an impact. All you have to do is speak up.

A Quick Guide to Letter Writing



A letter is the most frequently used method of communicating with public officials. Here are some guidelines and answers to questions you might have about writing to one of your representatives. See Figure 1 for a list of some "Basic Do's and Don'ts of Letter Writing."

Incidentally, even if you've had a personal meeting with an official or discussed some matter on the telephone, it's wise to confirm it with a letter that sets out your understanding of the exchange. A letter will remind him of you and your conversation, help both of you remember what was discussed, and give the official an opportunity to comment further or suggest where some misunderstanding may have come up.

Here are some of the basics:

1. Do I have to type?

No. Your goal is to be heard and understood. Since typescript is easier to read than most handwriting, type your letter if possible. But a typewritten letter carries no extra weight. If you write by hand, be extra careful to make it as legible as possible.

2. Do I have to use printed stationery?

No. As long as the necessary information is there, it doesn't matter if your letter is on paper that is printed, engraved, typed, or handwritten. That doesn't mean, however, that you should write on the back of an envelope or on a half-sheet of your

youngster's lined notebook paper. Plain, white 8½ by 11 typing paper is best.

3. Will colored ink or paper help me get attention?

Yes — the *wrong* kind of attention. Bright or unusual colors will only get in the way of what you're trying to say. Black or dark blue ink on white paper is best.

4. Should my letter be in some special form?

Use the standard business letter as your model. See Figure 2 for an example.

5. Do I have to write a lot?

No. Keep your letter brief and to the point. Each letter should deal with only one issue and should:

- identify the matter that concerns you. If some proposed legislation is involved, try to identify it by bill number, sponsor, or subject.
- explain your position briefly.
- show why it should concern the person you're writing to.
- tell him the result you're looking for.

The most effective way of presenting your views is the briefest way, in most cases.

6. Do I have to do a lot of research?

No. However, the more knowledgeable you sound about the issue, of course, the more seriously your views will be taken. And having hard facts to back up your opinion can only help. The more you know, and the more reasoned your argument, the more credible your letter will be.

7. I've seen pre-printed cards and coupons and solicitations to copy a model letter and send it in. Isn't it easier to use these?

It certainly is easier, and cards and coupons are effective. But your own views, expressed in an original letter, are more effective.

8. Do I have to worry about proper titles and other niceties?

You probably won't damage your case severely by

failing to observe the formalities, but protocol helps, if only by demonstrating that you care enough to do it right. It's not very complicated.

Figure 1

BASIC DO'S AND DON'TS OF LETTER WRITING

DO:

- Print or write clearly, or type if possible.
- Be brief and to the point. Two pages are acceptable, one is better.
- Use standard stationery — white, with blue or black ink or typewriter ribbon.
- Mention a bill number if you know it; if not, be as specific as possible about the matter that concerns you.
- Include your telephone number and home address.
- Sign your letter. An anonymous letter carries no weight. Have the courage of your convictions!

DON'T:

- Ramble on about your personal problems.
- Threaten your representative, senator, or official with dire consequences in the next election. He is quite aware that he is at the mercy of the voters.
- Be angry or abusive. Keep your feelings in control. Reason is far more persuasive than emotion.
- Bring in generalities, such as "This is the thing right-minded people want to do." It weakens your argument rather than strengthens it. You don't need generalities to back up your opinion; your opinion is enough!
- Don't worry if your letter looks short. If it says what you want, the shorter the better.
- Over-complicate the job of writing a letter: Once you think you've written a pretty good letter, sign it and mail it. It can't do any good until it arrives.

- **Addressing the envelope (and the inside address):**
At the local and state level, addressing someone by his title is usually appropriate. "Mayor Richard Wilson," "Assemblyman John Norton," etc.

At the Federal level, any elected official or Cabinet member you're likely to be writing to is probably entitled to "The Honorable" (or "The Hon.") as part of the address. For non-elected officials, "Mr./Mrs./Miss" will usually suffice.

- **Salutations:**

In the executive branch, write Dear + Mr. or Madam + Title, as in "Dear Mr. President" or "Dear Madam Secretary" (for a Cabinet official). It's the same at the state level.

In the legislative branch, use "Dear Senator (or Mr./Mrs./Miss Smith" or "Dear Representative (or Mr./Mrs./Miss) Johnson."

As for the judicial branch, there should be little occasion to write to judges, certainly not to try to influence the decision in a pending case. But if you do have reason to write, note that the Supreme Court has adopted the simple "Justice Williams" to replace the former "Mr. Justice Williams."

On the local level, either "Dear Mayor Roberts" or "Dear Mr. Roberts" is acceptable.

- **Closings:**

Avoid flowery closings. Use "Yours truly" or "Sincerely yours."

9. How about addresses?

You want your letter to reach its destination in as little time as possible. For the Federal Government, "Title, Name, and Washington, D.C." on the envelope is the minimum. You can cut delivery time by using the proper ZIP code, which you can obtain from your local post office. Some mail-heavy Federal offices have their own ZIP codes. The White House is 20500, the Senate is 20510, and the House of Representatives is 20515.

Figure 2

Here is a sample business-style letter for you to use as a model:

A. 123 Fourth Street
B. Argonaut, Kentucky 00919
C. (101) 234-5678
February 10, 1981

D. Hon. Rayburn Martin
E. U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

F. Dear Mr. Martin:

G. I agree with the aim of the bill to change the structure of the National Endowment for Resource Development.

H. However, I hope you will note that the proposed changes will eliminate the federal subsidies that support the breeding farm for Crusted Muffhens here in your district. As you know, this farm shelters the entire known population of this endangered species.

I. I feel strongly that we should not unwittingly bring about the demise of the Muffhens.

I hope you will take what steps you can to correct this problem.

J. Sincerely yours,
Nate Churlover
NATE CHURLOVER

- A. Be sure to give the person you're writing to your complete, accurate address. Use printed or engraved stationery if you like. But do not use a business letterhead unless you are authorized to speak for the business. That's misrepresentation, and it can be very embarrassing.
- B. Add your telephone number. It's a simple gesture that will save time if the official wants to talk to you.
- C. Don't forget the date of the letter.
- D. Use "Honorable" when addressing Federal-level officials. It's better to use a title where it's not warranted than to omit one where it is.
- E. Senators' and representatives' offices are located in a number of buildings: Longworth, Rayburn, Cannon, and so forth. If you know the addressee's office building, that will help speed up delivery. If not, this will get your letter there. (A call to your representative's office in your district will get you the exact address.)
- F. "Dear Representative Martin" is equally acceptable. (Incidentally, no matter how folksy an image a senator or congressman has, unless you know him personally it is not appropriate to write "Dear Al," "Dear Jimmy," etc.)
- G. This identifies the bill for him. If you know the bill number, by all means use it. Some writers use the form "RE: Bill to Change Structure of NERD" on a line between the inside address and the salutation. That's also acceptable.
- H. This tells him what your particular concern is, why you're concerned, and why *he* should be. The reference to something (adverse) about to happen in his district will guarantee his attention.
- I. This tells him, roughly, what you would like him to do.
- J. Sign it! Anonymous letters carry no weight at all.



Fine Tuning — Polishing Your Style

There are many ways you can speak up and be effective, from addressing your local governing body to writing an opinion piece for your town's newspaper to spearheading neighborhood support for one side or the other of an issue.

But whatever you do, the more you know and the more organized and reasoned your argument, the more effective you will be. Here are six guidelines to polishing your style — ways to insure that your letter, your remarks, or your contribution will be remembered.

Make a Rough Draft

Unless you are facing some sort of deadline, take your time in preparing your statement. Whether you are writing a letter or addressing a hearing board, a rough draft or notes can only help you be more logical and persuasive. You will almost always find that you can do a better job if you avoid hasty preparation.

Perhaps a rough draft isn't necessary for a brief note, but for longer messages organizing your ideas on paper will help you know better what you want to say. And if you are going to speak, notes or a rough draft can be invaluable, particularly if you get a touch of stage fright when your moment comes!

One Thing at a Time

One important principle to remember, whether writing a letter or planning an address, is to make just one important point. Don't look upon this as your only chance to get years of accumulated grievances off your chest. If you do you'll ramble and lose effectiveness. Decide on the main point you want to make and stick to it. There will always be another opportunity.

Get to the Point — Fast

Normally, when you're telling a story or a joke, you start at the beginning and build from there to the climax or punch line. But that is the *worst* way to make your point to a public official.

To be most effective in these situations, you begin with the

Speaking out in public can be one of the most effective ways of influencing an issue. It is also one of the most difficult. Learning to speak effectively, on your feet, takes years of practice, and few nonprofessionals do it well. It's hard to get the words started and even harder to stop them. We tend to wander and repeat ourselves.

That's why it's a good idea to make notes or a rough draft before you speak. If you have your ideas down on paper, you'll be able to keep them straight and in order.

If you're speaking at a meeting or a hearing, don't be afraid to read verbatim from your draft. It may sound a bit mechanical, but you can overcome that with practice, and it's better than trying frantically to remember what you wanted to say and, instead, wandering off the track.

climax or punch line, and work backwards. There is no need to try to build suspense. In fact, if you don't get to the point quickly — within a few sentences — you may lose your listener's interest completely.

So begin with the heart of your message, the essential point you want to make, and support it with only the necessary details in descending order of importance. Set these down on paper as though a gong might go off at any moment, cutting you off. If you've written or spoken so as to get the essence of your message across before the reader's attention span fades, you've made the most of your opportunity.

Remember Your Audience

Put yourself in the place of those you're addressing. You are very familiar with the issue and how it affects you. They aren't. Even your congressman, who tries to be in touch with issues that concern his district, must deal with dozens of bills. He can't be an expert on everything. Show him not only *that* some matter deserves his attention, but *why* it does.

Whether you'll be writing or speaking, remember that your audience is unlikely to look at the problem from your perspective. When you reread your draft, ask yourself if it's as clear and straightforward as it can be. Don't be afraid to revise, rephrase, or lop out whole paragraphs if they're unnecessary or confusing.

It can be a great help to show your draft to someone else, preferably someone who isn't too familiar with your subject. If your point doesn't come across readily, it could be that your writing lacks clarity and needs more revision.

Do Your Homework

Of course you don't have to be an expert in a field to express an opinion. But the more facts you have to back up your convictions, the more persuasive you'll be. If, from your unique perspective, you can supply new information or arguments, you'll certainly get attention!

At the local level, a letter will probably be read by the person to whom you're writing. At the state and Federal level, however, your message will probably be read, at least at first, by a staff aide. Don't be put off by that; it's the way the system works. It's the staff's job to digest all input. You can be sure that the substance of your letter, and, if you've done a very good job, your letter itself, will be passed along.

Whoever reads your letter, remember that you've got his complete attention for about one paragraph. And if you're speaking, you'll have only a few sentences to make certain your audience doesn't tune you out. That's the reason why it is so important to get the essential message at the beginning of your letter or remarks.

What's an attention-grabber? A clear, precise statement; concrete detail rather than abstraction. Proof, or at least evidence, is more persuasive than unsupported assertion. No matter how complex the issue, always try to make your point simply and clearly.

Think the matter through and tell why you're urging your particular position. Show elected officials how their constituencies will be affected. Your points will be read and might very well raise issues that had not previously been considered. It is not unheard of for the writer of a concise, thoughtful letter to receive a call asking for more information. (That's why you should always include your telephone number on your letter.) Should that happen to you, you'll know you've been listened to.

If you simply write and say that you want your congressman to oppose or support some bill or proposal before him, you won't be very effective. Realistically, you're telling him that you have neither strong convictions nor cogent thoughts on the matter. At best, your sentiment will be recorded on the pro/con tally sheet.

Avoid Emotionalism

Don't try to prop up your argument with abstract platitudes or generalities. Remarks such as "It's the patriotic

thing to do," "It would be good for the country," or "That's what all right-thinking people want," don't help. They are value judgments, just too abstract and arguable, no matter how strongly you believe in them, to persuade hard-headed politicians.

By the same token, avoid characterizing those who hold views opposite to yours as lacking in honor, patriotism, intelligence, or good will. It is perfectly acceptable to attack their views, but questioning their sanity or their motives is more likely to harm than help your argument. Keep personalities out of your messages. Public officials have enough controversy on their hands; they cannot afford to take sides in personal vendettas.

It's very easy to become angry when confronted with something that has happened or is about to happen on which you feel strongly. But you should remember that an abusive letter is a cause more for amusement than for serious consideration. So:

- **Don't threaten.** Officials know they will be up for reelection, reappointment, or promotion. It's not a matter that's ever far from their attention.

- **Don't be abusive.** Aside from giving evidence of loss of control, a letter or speech that indulges in name-calling or worse will accomplish nothing useful. Messages that succeed are those that suggest a course of action along with persuasive argument and evidence. An official won't change his position just because you don't like it.

- **Don't shout.** Some people literally shout when they're speaking, and that turns listeners off. And using language that is stronger than necessary to make a valid point in a letter is the equivalent of shouting.

Always remember that your goal is not just to vent steam or let someone know you think he's doing a bad job. Your goal is to be listened to by an official who has the power to act on whatever matter you're concerned about. The more calm and reasonable your letter is, and the more quickly you make your point and back it up with facts, the better your chances.

How the System Works



Most of the issues you'll want to speak up about will probably involve existing or proposed laws and regulations. The key to effectiveness, then, is a basic understanding of the legislative system. The timing of your remarks, and the selection of a recipient for them, can be crucial to your chances of success.

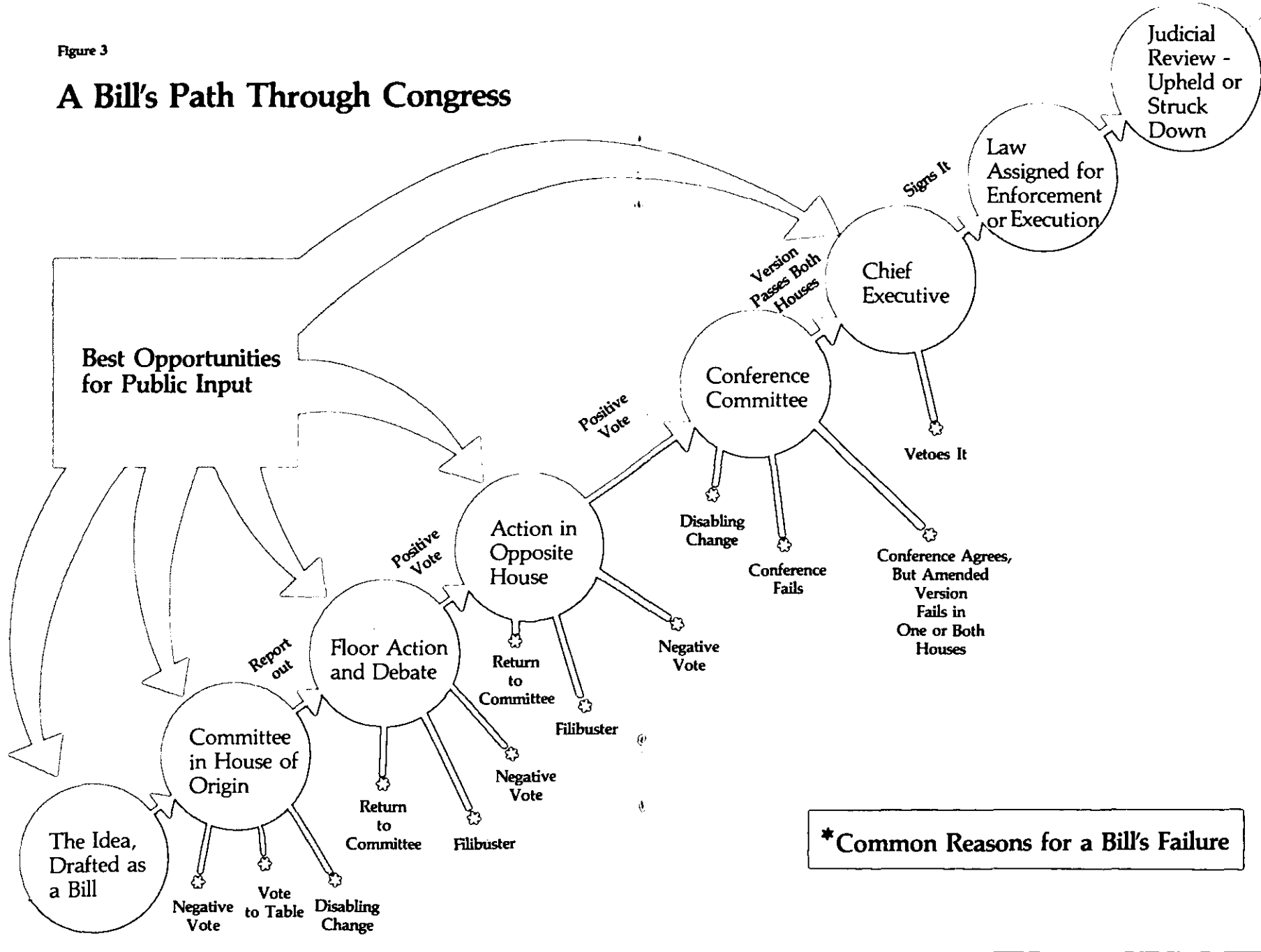
The Legislative Structure

As you know, at the Federal level, and in almost all state governments, the legislative system is bicameral, with two houses, the Senate and the House of Representatives. (At the state level, the equivalent of the House of Representatives is sometimes called the Assembly or House of Delegates.) There are presently 435 representatives, each from a Congressional district, and 100 senators, two elected at large from each state.

Representatives are thought to be closer to the people they serve than senators because each represents fewer people and has his own constituency within his state. Since your representative is responsible for his specific district, he's the person to whom you'll probably direct messages on personal problems and district-oriented issues that involve the Federal Government.

Figure 3

A Bill's Path Through Congress



For personal matters, such as a problem with your Social Security check, start with the local office of the Governmental agency that has jurisdiction over the matter. If you aren't successful in solving your problem there, then go to your own representative or senator. You may think that a different representative is more powerful or glamorous, but he has no specific obligation to respond to your needs. If you write to him, his staff will merely forward your letter to his counterpart from your district or state.

The Two-Year Cycle

Aside from the way their members are elected, there is another difference between the two Houses that influences the way they operate. Senators are elected to six-year terms, representatives to two-year terms. This also serves to make your representative more accessible. Moreover, it means that the entire legislative process is geared to two-year cycles or Congresses. A Congress begins in the year a President is inaugurated and another one begins in the third year of his term. Any business not completed by the end of a Congressional session dies with the Congress. It has to start from scratch, if at all, with the new Congress.

Committees

The two Houses transact most of their business through standing, special, and joint House-Senate committees.

Considerable shifting and rearranging of committees goes on at the start of each new Congress. The majority party in each House organizes the committees and takes the majority of seats and the chairmanships.

All proposed laws, or bills, become the property of the various committees once they're introduced, and there they

remain to await disposition. The committees can discuss them, change them, hold hearings on them, kill them, and sometimes report them to the floor, or full membership, of the House or Senate for debate and possible vote.

To pass a law, of course, both Houses have to agree, not just substantially, but exactly. In most cases, it doesn't matter which House starts the process.

A Bill's Path Through Congress

It's important to understand the possible journeys of a bill through Congress because your opportunities to exert any influence change at each step. It could sail through both Houses without incurring any stumbling blocks, but that's unusual. Or it can be derailed at any one of a number of points. Figure 3 shows the basic process, and the most common possible trouble spots.

Here are a few of those stumbling blocks that keep many bills from ever becoming law:

- **The bill fails to reach active consideration by the committee because the chairman or other powerful members don't want it considered.**
- **Even if it is considered, it may be tabled and forgotten.**
- **The committee may change it so substantially that its original purpose may be totally obscured.**
- **The committee may vote it down.**

Even if the bill reaches the floor of the House for debate, it can be sent back to committee, become the victim of a filibuster (in the Senate), or be voted down. And if it does pass, it must go through the same procedure in the other House.

Bills sometimes pass in one House and fail in the other, or different versions pass in each House. In the latter case, a conference committee made up of members of both Houses tries to reconcile the differences. If it fails, the bill fails. If it succeeds, the revised bill must then pass both Houses.

When the bill passed by both Houses reaches the President, he may sign it, veto it, or ignore it. If he vetoes it, a two-thirds

Figure 4

**Stages in the
Development of a Bill**

**Who Has
Jurisdiction**

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. The idea. | No one yet, except sponsor deciding whether or not to offer the bill. |
| 2. Bill sent to committee. | Committee to which bill is assigned. |
| 3. Floor action. | House of origin (if bill is reported out of committee and reaches floor vote). |
| 4. Floor action (other House). | Other House (when similar bill is introduced). |
| 5. Different versions of bill must be reconciled. | Conference committee (where two versions of bill will be reconciled). |

**To Whom
You Should Write**

Depending on House,
either representative or
senator.

Chairman and members
of the committee; your
own representative and
senators.

Presiding officer, majority,
and minority leaders, floor
manager, your senators,
or representative.

Same as in (3).

Committee members.

**Possible Actions
(For or Against)**

Plant the idea; urge
co-sponsorship or spon-
sorship in other House;
express opposition to bills
being drafted.

State your case; urge sup-
port for your position
with committee; ask your
representative or senator
to appear before the com-
mittee.

Explain your position. Let
them know people are
watching.

Same as in (3).

Little effective action is
available at this level.
This is a horse-trading
session, and only the con-
ferrees can arrange a deal.
Generally, this is a time
they don't welcome out-
side help unless you have
a brilliantly persuasive
argument that hasn't been
made yet.

Figure 4 continued next page.

Figure 4 continued.

**Stages in the
Development of a Bill**

**Who Has
Jurisdiction**

6. Bill goes to the
President.

Office of the Chief
Executive.

7. Law is assigned for
enforcement or
execution.

Department or agency to
which law is assigned for
administration or
enforcement.

8. Legal challenge to law.

The courts (in a court
challenge).

**To Whom
You Should Write**

**Possible Actions
(For or Against)**

The President or those of his advisors concerned with the substance of the bill (see U.S. Government Manual, Appendix II).

Urge him to sign or veto.

Head or chief of administration or enforcement agency.

By the time a law has reached this stage, if you oppose it your only recourse will be to seek exclusion from onerous provisions. For regulatory acts that provide for rule making, public comment is almost always required before the rules can be imposed. Then you can write, testify at the hearings, or join with a larger group that supports your position.

Stay away from this situation unless you are a party to the case, in which event, follow the lawyers' advice. There is almost nothing you can do on your own that doesn't have the potential for prejudicing the case.

vote is needed to override the President's action. If he ignores it, it becomes a law in ten days unless Congress adjourns during that time. In that case the bill dies, and the President's action is called a pocket veto.

Finally, even after a law has been enacted it can be subjected to judicial review and struck down.

Strategy — Where You Fit In

It's easy to see that any bill, no matter how well-conceived, has little chance of emerging unscathed, or even of emerging at all, from the Congressional maze. You can help it along, or block its path, depending on your opinion of the measure, but exercising your power means knowing what is happening at each step, and who has jurisdiction. Figure 4 will help you identify who can best respond to your interests at each step.

Your opportunities are best at the early stages of a bill's passage through the House or Senate. (And remember, the procedure is basically the same for bills at the state level of government.)

When a bill has just been introduced, is in committee, or is up for a floor vote, you have more of a chance of influencing the outcome than at later stages. Your targets — senators and representatives, committee chairmen, floor managers — are in the best position to know exactly what can be done and how to do it. That's why you should avoid urging a specific course of action on them. Instead, explain the final result you're seeking. Assuming you've succeeded in enlisting them on your side, they'll know whether to try to kill the measure, or seek an amendment, quick vote, or use other parliamentary maneuvers.

Choosing Your Targets

How do you decide to whom to write about an issue? Senators and representatives "wear many hats" and serve in different capacities, as personal representatives of their constituents, as committee members, and as party leaders.

On public policy issues, a senator's or representative's role can be very broad. As a committee member or chairman, the representative includes you in his constituency regardless of his district or state. Address him through his committee on matters over which that committee has jurisdiction.

Other roles for congressmen include organizational responsibilities, such as Speaker or majority leader, or membership in special unofficial groups, such as the Black Caucus and Hispanic Caucus. Again, if your concern is related to those functions, then be certain to address the congressman in that capacity.

Spreading the Word — Getting Others Involved



So far we've discussed several ways you as an individual can affect the governmental process. Obviously, writing a letter is better than doing nothing. Writing a pointed, well-constructed letter, to the right person at the right time, is best. Using all the tools available to you will strengthen your argument and help you work strategically by knowing when and to whom to communicate for maximum effectiveness.

Another way to increase your impact is to recruit others, enlisting them in your cause by making it their cause, too. If you aren't the sort to talk politics, then don't. Talk issues — right and wrong, improvement versus decline. It doesn't take a burning, missionary-type zeal to become the nucleus of a fairly large force, just the conviction that you can succeed and a low-key approach.

Start With Your Friends

If you care enough about an issue to become involved, it's likely that others share the same concerns. Think about your closest friends and regular associates. You probably share common interests with more people than you realize: neighbors, people with whom you work, fellow members of clubs, teams, church groups, and service organizations.

You have access to all these people. They know you or

have at least met you before. Talk to them. Don't push; let the discussions be natural. Most people hesitate to commit themselves to something until they've had a chance to think about it and become comfortable with the idea. If you've been persuasive and honest with them, people will begin to enlist in your cause. Some will be fired up enough to start recruiting on their own.

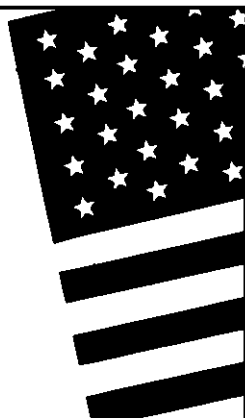
In the meantime, stay on top of the issue. Know what hearings are going to be held and when, and keep track of the status of bills you're interested in. If you have the necessary information at hand, people will start coming to you for help. Expertise will help you become a better organizer.

Chances are you'll see the results of your efforts most immediately in local issues, such as opposition to or support for proposed new highways or major zoning changes in your community. When a state or national issue is involved, you'll find that you have counterparts in other communities in your state, and in other states throughout the country. Many of the better-known groups that have succeeded in developing substantial political power had their beginnings in someone's living room, with a few individuals sitting around wondering if they could have an effect!

A Final Suggestion

Whether you're acting as an individual or as a member of a group, don't forget that your contact with public officials doesn't have to be limited to a call for their services or their support. An occasional pat on the back can work wonders. If you like a speech, agree with a statement, or support a vote, say so. Your interest and expression of approval will be appreciated, and you'll help forge what could be a long-term link.

Appendix I - Some Useful Washington Addresses



Here are a few addresses and telephone numbers of people and offices in the Federal Government you might be likely to write or call. All telephone numbers are in Area Code 202.

Executive Branch

The President	The White House 20500	456-1414
(If you want to leave a comment or message at The White House, call 456-1414 and ask for the Comment Office.)		
The First Lady	The White House 20500	456-1414
The Vice President	Executive Office Bldg. 20501	456-7123

The Capitol Switchboard

224-3121

(This switchboard can connect you with any office of Congress — senators, representatives, congressional committees, Bill Status Office, majority and minority leaders, etc.)

Executive Agencies

Agency:	Address:
Office of Management and Budget (Director)	New Executive Office Bldg. Washington, D.C. 20503
Central Intelligence Agency (Director)	Langley, VA 20505

Departments:

Agriculture (Secretary)	14th St. & The Mall Washington, D.C. 20550
-------------------------	---

Forest Service (Asst. Secy.)	14th St. & The Mall Washington, D.C. 20550
Transportation (Secretary)	400 7th St. Washington, D.C. 20590
US Coast Guard (Commandant)	400 7th St. Washington, D.C. 20590
Federal Aviation Agency (Director)	800 Independence Ave. Washington, D.C. 20591
Federal Highway Administration (Director)	800 Independence Ave. Washington, D.C. 20591
National Highway Safety Admin. (Director)	800 Independence Ave. Washington, D.C. 20591
Treasury (Secretary)	15th & Pennsylvania Ave. Washington, D.C. 20220
Bureau of Alcohol, Firearms & Tobacco (Commissioner)	15th & Pennsylvania Ave. Washington, D.C. 20220
US Customs Service (Commissioner)	15th & Pennsylvania Ave. Washington, D.C. 20220
Internal Revenue Service (Commissioner)	15th & Pennsylvania Ave. Washington, D.C. 20220
Secret Service (Director)	15th & Pennsylvania Ave. Washington, D.C. 20220

Other Agencies

Arms Control & Disarmament Agency (Director)	State Dept. Bldg. Washington, D.C. 20451
Civil Aeronautics Board (Chairman)	1825 Connecticut Ave. Washington, D.C. 20428
Civil Service Commission (Chairman)	1900 E St. Washington, D.C. 20415
Consumer Products Safety Commission (Chairman)	1111 18th St. Washington, D.C. 20207
Environmental Protection Agency (Administrator)	401 M St. Washington, D.C. 20460
Equal Employment Opportunities Comm. (Chairman)	2401 E St. Washington, D.C. 20506
Federal Aviation Admin.	(Transportation Department)
Federal Election Comm. (Chairman)	1325 K St. Washington, D.C. 20463

Federal Communications Comm. (Chairman)	1919 M St. Washington, D.C. 20554
Federal Power Comm. (Chairman)	825 N. Capital St. Washington, D.C. 20426
Food & Consumer Affairs (Asst. Secretary)	14th St. & The Mall Washington, D.C. 20550
Marketing Services (Asst. Secretary)	14th St. & The Mall Washington, D.C. 20550
Commerce (Secretary)	145 H St. Washington, D.C. 20230
Defense (Secretary)	The Pentagon Washington, D.C. 20301
Army (Secretary)	The Pentagon Washington, D.C. 20301
Coast Guard	(See Transportation Department)
Navy (Secretary)	The Pentagon Washington, D.C. 20301
Air Force (Secretary)	The Pentagon Washington, D.C. 20301
Joint Chiefs of Staff (Chairman)	The Pentagon Washington, D.C. 20301
Health & Human Services (Secretary)	330 Independence Ave. Washington, D.C. 20201
Public Health Service (Asst. Secretary)	200 Independence Ave. Washington, D.C. 20201
Food & Drug Admin. (Commissioner)	5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, MD 20857
Social Security Administration (Director)	9000 Rockville Pike, Bethesda, MD 20015
Housing & Urban Development (Secretary)	451 7th St. Washington, D.C. 20201
Interior (Secretary)	18th & C Streets Washington, D.C. 20240
Justice (Attorney General)	9th & Constitution Washington, D.C. 20530
Federal Bureau of Investigation (Director)	935 Pennsylvania Ave. Washington, D.C. 20535
Immigration & Naturalization Service (Commissioner)	425 I St. Washington, D.C. 20536

Labor (Secretary)	200 Constitution Ave. Washington, D.C. 20210
Occupational Safety & Health Admin. (Asst. Secretary)	200 Constitution Ave. Washington, D.C. 20210
Bureau of Labor Statistics (Commissioner)	441 G St. Washington, D.C. 20212
State (Secretary)	2201 C St. Washington, D.C. 20520
Agency for International Development (Administrator)	21st & Virginia Washington, D.C. 20523
Passport Office (Director)	2201 C St. Washington, D.C. 20520
Federal Reserve System (Chairman)	20th & Constitution Washington, D.C. 20551
Federal Trade Comm. (Chairman)	6th & Pennsylvania Washington, D.C. 20580
Food & Drug Admin.	(See Department of Health & Human Services)
Interstate Commerce Comm. (Chairman)	12th & Constitution Washington, D.C. 20423
National Endowment for the Arts (Chairman)	2401 E St. Washington, D.C. 20506
National Endowment for the Humanities (Chairman)	806 15th St. Washington, D.C. 20506
National Highway Safety Admin.	(See Dept. of Transportation)
National Mediation Board (Chairman)	1425 K St. Washington, D.C. 20572
National Science Foundation (Director)	1800 G St. Washington, D.C. 20550
Nuclear Regulatory Comm. (Chairman)	1717 H St. Washington, D.C. 20555
Securities & Exchange Comm. (Chairman)	500 N Capitol St. Washington, D.C. 20549
Small Business Admin. (Administrator)	1441 L St. Washington, D.C. 20416
US Commission on Civil Rights (Chairman)	1121 Vermont St. Washington, D.C. 20425
US Postal Service (Chairman)	475 L'Enfant Plaza Washington, D.C. 20260
Veterans Admin. (Administrator)	H & Vermont Washington, D.C. 20420

Legislative Branch

Senate Committees

Appropriations	Dirksen Office Bldg., Room 322 Washington, D.C. 20510
Armed Services	Russell Office Bldg., Room 212 Washington, D.C. 20510
Environment & Public Works	Dirksen Office Bldg., Room 4202 Washington, D.C. 20510
Foreign Relations	Dirksen Office Bldg., Room 4229 Washington, D.C. 20510
Judiciary	Dirksen Office Bldg., Room 2226 Washington, D.C. 20510
Democratic Policy	S-118, The Capitol Washington, D.C. 20515
Republican Policy	Russell Office Bldg., Room 445 Washington, D.C. 20510

House of Representatives Committees

Agriculture	Longworth Office Bldg., Rm 1301 Washington, D.C. 20515
Armed Services	Rayburn Office Bldg., Rm 2120 Washington, D.C. 20515
Interstate & Foreign Commerce	Rayburn Office Bldg., Rm 2125 Washington, D.C. 20515
Judiciary	Rayburn Office Bldg., Rm 2137 Washington, D.C. 20515
Small Business	Rayburn Office Bldg., Rm 2361 Washington, D.C. 20515
Veterans' Affairs	Cannon Office Bldg., Rm 335 Washington, D.C. 20515
Ways & Means	Longworth Office Bldg., Rm 1102 Washington, D.C. 20515

National Political Parties

Democratic National Committee	1625 Massachusetts Ave. Washington, D.C. 20036
Republican National Committee	310 First St. Washington, D.C. 20003

Your senators' district offices:

Your representative's district office:



Appendix II - Information Sources

As we've pointed out in the preceding chapters, the more information you have, the better equipped you'll be to make your point. Here are some sources to help you find out what's going on, how it may affect you, and what you can do about it.

Libraries

The librarian at your local library can be an enormous help. Whether you simply need to know the name of your congressman, or want to do research on an issue, your local library is often the best place to begin. If you have access to a school, college, or university library, consider yourself particularly advantaged. They are likely to have the more extensive indexes and information services. Here are some of the sources that you should look for and learn to use:

Official Congressional Directory is published for each Congress by the Government Printing Office. It will tell you who's who, committee assignments, officers of the two Houses, brief biographies and addresses, and names of staff assistants.

U.S. Government Manual, also published by the Government Printing Office, lists the people and titles in the entire Federal establishment.

Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report is the essential guide to what the Congress is up to, day by day. Published weekly and indexed quarterly, it lists all bills in the works, what committees are holding hearings, and where. (They're not always in Washington.)

Special reports. See what's available from the "think tanks." These are organizations that pay experts in various fields to think about, identify, and define problems and opportunities. Do some browsing. You're

almost certain to find matters concerning your special interests, including some data to help you support your argument. Here are some:

American Enterprise Institute
Brookings Institution
The Conference Board
Hudson Institute
RAND Corporation
SRI International

Indexes. When you need to pin down some event and find out where you can read about it, the periodical indexes can help. Look for:

Facts on File
New York Times Index
Wall Street Journal Index
Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature

Local Resources

There are many sources of information about local and state matters. Your local Chamber of Commerce may publish a guide to town or city officials, with the names of boards, their members, and their functions. Most state governments publish an annual guide to state officials and services, complete with telephone numbers and addresses.

League of Women Voters. The League, a non-partisan group aimed at increasing public participation in the political process, can be an invaluable source of basic as well as more complex information about the legislative system, functions of government at every level, and how you can be effective.

Your local newspapers. Get to know the reporters and editors who can be very helpful. The newspaper's library may be accessible to the public and often has very complete files on local issues. Newspaper editorials are often a good place to find arguments on both sides of a wide variety of issues.

Your congressman's district office. Don't forget that your Federal representative's local office can be an excellent source of information on all issues to do with the Federal Government. Call him when you've reached a dead end in solving a personal problem, or when you need information on an issue and can't find it anywhere else.

Associations

Whether your goal is to lick 'em or join 'em, you can use the information available from groups that have axes to grind, programs to push, and special interests to guard. They don't have to know which side you're on. Their information is usually free, or available at a nominal cost. (The biggest inconvenience to you is likely to be the mailing lists you'll end up

on. You can ignore subsequent mailings and solicitations.) It's important to know what arguments are being advanced on all sides of an issue.

There are hundreds of special interest groups, organized to deal with almost any conceivable topic. A complete list can be found in *Gale's Encyclopedia of Associations*, which should be available at your local library.

Notes:

