



The “Dos and Don’ts” of Writing to Your Local Legislator

DO:

- Identify yourself - a letter will be given serious consideration if you are a constituent.
- Be specific - Clearly illustrate your support or opposition for the bill.
- Address the letter correctly – your local legislator, along with their office addresses, can be found on the following website:

<http://www.njleg.state.nj.us>

- Open your letter with the phrase “Dear Representative (last name)”. Letters to Senators should be addressed to same way, but open with the phrase “dear Senator (last name)”.
- Illustrate your position with local examples – legislators and staff appreciate how legislation affects local constituents; let them know.
- If you rarely write elected officials, say that.
- Offer to serve as a resource – highlight your expertise or community involvement.
- Be timely – write when the issue is current.

DON’T:

- Don’t be argumentative or confrontational.
- **Avoid jargon and complex medical terms.**
- Don’t make threats such as “don’t count on my vote next election if you don’t ...”
- Don’t misrepresent your position – decisions should be based on sound data and accurate facts.

Talking Points Specific to Epilepsy Prescription Protection:

- This bill is known as **A3029** in the State Assembly and **S2071** in the State Senate. Please refer to the proper bill number based on which legislator you are contacting.
- One of the most important points to discuss is **how this bill can impact your life**, or the lives of others: how will having the ability to decide whether or not you switch your medication formula help regulate seizures? What are the implications of unexpected breakthrough seizures to your personal and professional life?
- Be sure to explain that this bill **does not advocate against generic medications**; the EFNJ acknowledges the many benefits of being able to use more cost effective medications. This bill simply ensures that before patients have their formulas changed, they and their physicians are aware of the change and understand any consequences that could result.
- Reiterating a point made earlier, because this concerns a medical issue, please **avoid complex medical terms**. While medical professionals and research studies have provided plenty of expertise filled with medical jargon, you are going to be able to provide the “face” to this bill with your personal, emotional accounts on how this bill truly affects society in a way legislators can better connect with.
- **Personal letters truly create a bigger impact on legislators**. However we understand not everyone may know the proper starting point for a letter, so we have provided a skeleton template. From here, you would be able to inject your own personal stories and voice.

The Honorable (full name)
(Office Address)

Dear Representative (last name):

RE: Please Support (bill number)

As your constituent, I respectfully request that you support (bill number).

(Write your supporting statements here).

I would very much appreciate receiving a response from you setting out what action you intend to take in connection with this legislation.

Thank you for considering my thoughts and opinions on this matter.

Sincerely,

(Your Name)
(Your Address)
(Your City, State, Zip)