



Letter Writing Is a Powerful Advocacy Tool

Writing a personal email is an important form of communication between constituents and elected officials — email is recommended because traditional mail is subject to extensive security restrictions that can significantly delay delivery. Below are several tips for writing an attention-grabbing letter to your policymaker:

- Introduce yourself, including that you are a constituent and neuroscientist living or working in their district or state.
- State in the first paragraph your reason for writing. For example, that you are asking that they support a funding request or a piece of legislation by bill number/name.
- Tell your story — explain how the legislation or policy relates to your work and how it will affect their constituents. Members of Congress are looking for the human element and a connection to the community, so personalizing your story will make your message more memorable.
- Cover only one issue or bill per letter. Be specific with bill names/numbers and identify the bill's sponsor(s).
- Keep it succinct and limited to one page.
- Address a separate letter to each of your legislators.
- Find your policymaker's contact information through their official website or from SfN staff at advocacy@sfn.org.

To find suggested language and information to guide you to the appropriate congressional staff member, go to the Action Center at [SfN.org/advocacy](https://www.sfn.org/advocacy).

Recommended formatting:

U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable (full name)
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative (last name):

OR

U.S. Senate

The Honorable (full name)
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator (last name):

(over)



Example Letter

Dear Senator (or Representative) _____,

— *example letter using science policy language* —

As a constituent and a neuroscientist, I ask that you protect higher education and research as the tax bill goes to Conference Committee. Please reject the provisions in H.R. 1 (the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act) that repeal graduate student tax benefits. These long-standing provisions allow graduate students serving as teaching and research assistants to afford a graduate education. Treating tuition waivers as taxable income would unnecessarily increase the cost of obtaining a degree, resulting in graduate students abandoning their education and ultimately decreasing America's workforce of highly skilled scientists and our nation's competitiveness internationally.

I also ask that you eliminate the proposed excise tax on university endowments, which would result in institutions having less capital to invest in research, infrastructure, and talent retention. These increased liabilities will disproportionately affect scientific research and the economic growth driven by scientific discovery. The U.S. needs future generations of highly trained scientists. Failure to protect graduate student tax benefits or university endowment provisions jeopardizes the future of our scientific workforce and their resulting breakthroughs.

Thank you for prioritizing the accessibility and affordability of graduate education and acknowledging its contribution to American society and the long-term health of all individuals.

— *example letter using appropriations language* —

As a constituent and a neuroscientist, I am deeply concerned about the prospect of cuts to biomedical research in FY18 budget negotiations. Drastic cuts through sequestration caps would derail today's scientific discoveries and jeopardize tomorrow's health advances. As you consider the FY18 budget, I urge you to raise the sequestration caps and protect federal funding for biomedical research.

[Insert information about the research, institution, and results you are striving for in your lab/research projects to personalize the letter briefly and underscore its value and contributions.]

As the primary federal agencies responsible for conducting and supporting neuroscience research, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the National Science Foundation (NSF) fund research that drives scientific innovation and develops new and improved diagnostics, prevention strategies, and treatments. Federal investments in NIH and NSF contribute to the nation's economic strength by creating skilled, high-paying jobs, advancing medical breakthroughs, and developing scientific technologies that lead to economic growth. Robust, sustained investment in biomedical research will:

- ▶ Support new research on Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, traumatic brain injury, and a host of other neurological disorders.
- ▶ Improve diagnostic and treatment options for military service members suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.
- ▶ Protect America's global standing in science and maintain our position as the world leader in pharmaceuticals and biotechnology.

The budgetary decisions made in coming weeks will have major implications for the future of America's health and economic growth. I urge you to work with your colleagues to raise the sequestration caps and prevent cuts to biomedical research.

Sincerely,

(your full name)

(your title, institution)

(your physical address – to prove constituency)

(your email address and/or phone number)