



Advocacy Education Series: Writing Effective Fact Sheets and Action Alerts

The main purpose of a fact sheet or action alert is to get the reader to do something. A fact sheet uses examples, statistics, and personal stories in an effort to persuade a policymaker to agree with your viewpoint, support or oppose a policy, or create a new policy. An action alert uses this same information to encourage concerned citizens, colleagues, or fellow group members to urge their respective policymaker to support or oppose legislation.

Make sure your outreach is as effective as possible by following the tips below.

- **One page is best.** Anything more than one page is most likely not going to be read, or it's going to get lost. People are more likely to read something that appears short and to the point. Handing someone a multi-page letter is a good way of not getting noticed.
- **Start off with the most important information.** Even with short letters and fact sheets, rarely does the entire piece get read. Staff will likely read the first paragraph and then skim the remaining page for key words and stats. Start out by identifying the issue and actionable item, making it clear why the reader should care.
- **Use bullet points to illustrate key facts.** This will make your key points stand out, even with a quick skim. Keep the bullet points brief.
- **Leave lots of white space.** If it looks simple, straightforward, and to the point, there is a much higher chance that it will be read.
- **Always make the actionable item clear.** What is it that you want the reader to do? Make sure it's clearly mentioned and is clearly visible. Bold or underline the text to make it stand out.
- **Include all the necessary information.** Make sure your audience has every possible bit of information they need to complete your requested action, including relevant phone numbers, addresses, bill numbers and links to bill texts, bill sponsors, etc. Participation and success drop dramatically with each piece of information your reader is asked to look up or find on their own.

For additional guidance or questions, please contact Monica L. Reid, Senior Director of Advocacy, at mreid@nacdl.org.