

Political Advocacy



Psychology courses are often part of a university's College of Behavioral Sciences; at [HIGH SCHOOL], the psych classes are part of the Social Sciences department. Part of our Department's mission is building your civic engagement — that applies even to psychology classes.

Thus, for this assignment you will be (1) choosing an issue that is important to you and meaningfully intersects with the broad field of psychology, and (2) writing to your elected officials about the issue, what you suggest, and why it's important to you.

Your Issue

Think about things that interest you, upset you, that you want to see improved or just changed. Consider what the hook to "Psychology" might be. Maybe click through to the textbook and look at the [\[REFERENCE\]](#)  just to refresh your memory on the subfields.

When I wrote to the APA asking for their help with this assignment, they pointed me to this webpage: [Advocacy Issues \(https://www.apaservices.org/advocacy/issues\)](https://www.apaservices.org/advocacy/issues). Maybe something there sparks your curiosity or interest?  Clicking into one of those topic areas will show you what the APA has been advocating for; maybe you want to pull some ideas or even verbiage from them?

Here are twenty different topics, just to get you started thinking about "your issue":

- Mental health support and accessibility in schools and colleges.
- The importance of early childhood education and its impact on long-term psychological development.
- Advocating for increased funding for mental health research and treatment.
- Addressing the stigma surrounding mental health and promoting awareness campaigns.
- Supporting legislation to improve access to affordable psychological services and therapies.
- Implementing policies to reduce bullying and promote positive school climates.
- Advocating for comprehensive sex education programs in schools.
- Raising awareness about the psychological consequences of poverty and advocating for policies to alleviate it.
- Promoting policies to address and prevent domestic violence and abuse.
- Supporting legislation to combat opioid addiction and improve access to addiction treatment.
- Advocating for stricter gun control measures to address the impact of gun violence on mental health.

- Promoting diversity and inclusivity in mental health research, treatment, and workforce.
- Addressing the impact of social media on mental health and advocating for responsible usage.
- Supporting policies to improve access to affordable and quality healthcare, including mental health services.
- Advocating for stronger anti-discrimination laws to protect individuals with mental illnesses.
- Promoting awareness and support for individuals with autism spectrum disorders.
- Advocating for policies that address the mental health needs of veterans and active-duty military personnel.
- Supporting initiatives to improve mental health services in rural and underserved areas.
- Addressing the impact of climate change on mental health and advocating for environmental policies.
- Promoting psychological well-being and stress reduction programs in workplaces and educational institutions.

Research Your Topic

Find out a little bit about your topic so that your letter can have specific details in it, and so that you can advocate for a specific, actionable item. Google it maybe; or use [GovTrack.us](https://www.govtrack.us)  (<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/#find>) for federal legislation or [LegiScan](https://legiscan.com)  (<https://legiscan.com/CA>) for proposed state legislation. Both are searchable, so you can use keywords associated with "Your Issue".

Write Your Letter

Your letter does not need to be long or overly complex. A staffer will read it, and they will just count your letter as one of many either For or Against some piece of legislation or policy (and – full disclosure here – your email address will be added to the representative's mailing list.) Here are the guidelines from the APA:

Recommended Message Lengths

12 words

Maximum in a sentence before people lose track of the content.

50 words

Can fit on a phone screen without scrolling.

100 words

Will meet most letter to the editor guidelines.

450 words

Recommended maximum in any communication to elected officials.

6-8 paragraphs

Recommended for one pagers, etc. Short paragraphs keep information digestible.



Sample Letter

Dear Governor Newsom,

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 402, as amended, introduced by Assembly Member Wahab, regarding the involuntary commitment of individuals with specified mental disorders. This legislation would expand the existing provisions of the Lanterman-Petris-Short Act to authorize licensed mental health professionals to take individuals into custody, alongside peace officers and designated members of mobile crisis teams, for evaluation and treatment. As a high school teacher in San Francisco, this issue is something I have experience with and feel quite strongly about.

The proposed addition of licensed mental health professionals to the list of individuals authorized to initiate involuntary commitment is a crucial step forward in addressing the challenges faced by our mental health care system. By involving these professionals, who possess specialized expertise in diagnosing and treating mental health disorders, we can enhance the accuracy and effectiveness of the evaluation and treatment process. This amendment recognizes the valuable role that licensed mental health professionals can play in ensuring the well-being and safety of individuals who are a danger to themselves or others, or

gravely disabled due to mental health issues.

Furthermore, the inclusion of licensed mental health professionals aligns with the broader goal of promoting a multidisciplinary approach to mental health care. Collaborative efforts among professionals from various disciplines are essential for comprehensive and holistic treatment. By empowering licensed mental health professionals to participate in the involuntary commitment process, SB 402 creates a more inclusive and integrated system that can better address the complex needs of individuals experiencing mental health crises.

In conclusion, I kindly request your support for SB 402, as amended. This legislation represents a significant step forward in improving our mental health care system and ensuring the timely evaluation and treatment of individuals in crisis.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I trust that your careful consideration of SB 402 will contribute to the betterment of mental health care in our state.

Sincerely,
[NAME]

Frankly that's a little long; and part of it is a little repetitious — but it's good enough, and I don't want to invest too much time in making it perfect when it's only going to get skimmed by some staffer. Note also that if I change the "Dear Governor..."-part, I can send the *exact* same letter to my state assembly and state senate reps ;)

Find Your Representatives

Depending on your issue and whether you found a specific and relevant piece of legislation that you'd like to argue For or Against, you'll either send your letter(s) to federal or state representatives.

Use [Congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov)  (<https://www.congress.gov>) to find your federal representatives:

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Current Congress Examples: hr5, sres9, "health care" MORE OPTIONS

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[H.R. 7024](#) [118th] Tax Relief for American Families and Workers Act of 2024
[H.R. 4366](#) [118th] Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024

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Current Legislative Activities
 118th Congress (2023-2024)

House of Representatives
 Not in Session
 Video Archive
 Next Meeting: March 19, 2024 at 12:00 PM EDT
 Previous Meeting: [March 15, 2024](#)

Senate
 Not in Session
 Video Archive
 Next Meeting: March 19, 2024 at 3:00 PM EDT
 Previous Meeting: [March 15, 2024](#)

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Members Examples: Don Bacon, Wyden

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Find address or place

1. [Senator Butler, Laphonza R.](#)
 State: California
 Party: Democratic
 Served: Senate: 2023-Present
 Contact: 112 Hart Senate Office Building Washington, DC 20510
 (202) 224-3841
[Contact](#)

2. [Senator Padilla, Alex](#)
 State: California
 Party: Democratic
 Served: Senate: 2021-Present
 Contact: 331 Hart Senate Office Building Washington, DC 20510
 (202) 224-3553
[Contact](#)

3. [Representative Pelosi, Nancy](#)
 State: California
 Party: Democratic
 Served: House: 1987-Present
 Contact: 1236 Longworth House Office Building
 (202) 225-4965
[Contact](#)

Maybe you're emailing your state representatives? Then use [CA.gov](https://findyourrep.legislature.ca.gov) (<https://findyourrep.legislature.ca.gov>).

Perhaps, since you have the letter already written, you'd also like to email the [Governor](https://www.gov.ca.gov/contact/) (<https://www.gov.ca.gov/contact/>) or the [President](https://www.whitehouse.gov/contact/) (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/contact/>)?

Deliverable

I expect you to send email your **three** representatives, *and* the **executive** officer. It's the same letter, you're just sending it to four people — either state or federal, your choice. Take screenshots of each

send, paste them into the file with your letter's text, PDF it, and submit here.

Points 5

Submitting a file upload

File Types pdf