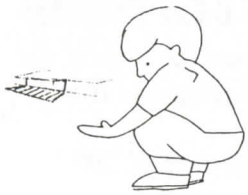

Exercise Your Right to Write!

Overview: In this activity, students will write to their State or Federal legislators about their field trip to the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge.
Content Standards Correlations: History/Social Science, p. 290

Grades: K-6

Key Concept: People have the right to express their ideas with their elected Federal Legislators, State Senators, or State Assembly members.

Objective:
Students will be able to:
- write and/or draw pictures about one thing they learned about San Francisco Bay wetlands
- construct a letter to a government official

Time: 30 to 50 minutes

Supporting Information for This Activity

- **Federal Government:** Federal legislation (bills) are introduced by Congress, in either the Senate or the House of Representatives. Both branches of Congress must pass a bill before it can go on to the President. The President can either sign the bill, making it a law, or veto the bill. If the President vetoes the bill, Congress must either override the veto by a two-thirds majority vote, change the bill and send it back to the President, or drop the bill. Each state is represented by two Senators and a number of Representatives (the number depends on the size of the state's population). Senators are elected every six years, Representatives every two years. There are no term limits in the U.S. Congress.
- **California State Government:** State legislation (bills) are introduced in the State Legislature which is made up of the Senate and Assembly. Each district is represented by one Senator and two Assembly Members. Senators are elected every four years (they can serve a maximum of two terms) and Assembly members every two years (they can serve a maximum of three terms).

Teaching Method

Do (Grades 3-6)
Describe each branch of government and their duties. Write the letter format below on the blackboard and describe how to use it. Each student can send their correspondence to individual legislators or the whole class can decide to send their correspondence to one legislator.

Do (Grades K-2)
Review with students what they learned about San Francisco Bay wetlands. Have them draw the favorite thing they learned about wetlands. Have the whole class send their correspondence to one legislator.

Generic Letter Format *(words in italics need to be filled in)*
The Honorable *first and last name*
address from list

Date

Dear Representative or Senator *last name*,
introductory paragraph
the body of your comments
closing paragraph

Sincerely,