How to write a letter to an elected official on an issue of science and science policy

Length
Above all, be reasonably brief. One full page to a page and one half at the most (single spaced and including inside address and your signature. You are stating your position and why it is important to you. You are not educating them on the subject. Always limit the letter to one single subject or issue.

Approach
Be courteous. Request action and do not demand it. Be constructive, not negative. If writing a congressman about a bill that deals with a problem and the bill seems to be a wrong solution, propose constructive alternatives. Write in your own words. Be yourself. If you are copying a model letter, put it into your own words.

Organization
Use the "three tells" organization for this sort of letter. In the first paragraph, tell them what you're going to tell them. Explain your reason for writing (on one single subject or issue). If it's relevant, describe your "credentials" or experience but DO NOT say things such as I am just a student.

Your Message
In the second (and third if needed) paragraph(s) discuss the issue and explain your stand. Frame your discussion in a national, rather than a personal perspective. Cite relevant facts while avoiding emotionalism. Give them information they can use, including what you are hearing from others. Be specific and practical.

Wrapping Up
In the last paragraph summarize by telling them what you told them. Offer assistance if you have some expertise to offer. Ask a question needing more than just a yes or no answer. This kind of question requires a response.