

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR GUIDE

Letters to the editor are an effective action to influence elected officials. Lawmakers and their staffers read the letters to see what their constituents care about. In addition, it can educate and inspire others to get involved in the campaign.

HOW TO WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR (LTE)

- Focus on papers that your target legislators read
 - » Check out the papers' websites for specifics on how to submit an LTE
 - » Follow the rules in order to have the best chance to get it published
- Start with "Dear Editor" or "To the Editor"
- Keep it short and concise. In general it should be no more than 250-300 words, and often the outlet will have a word count on their website
 - » Include the problem and what should be done about it
 - » Refer to proposed legislation
- Ideally, connect it to something recent like a recent editorial, LTE, news story, etc.
- Make it personal - how does this issue affect you and the rest of your community? Why does it matter?
- Sign the letter with your name and contact information (this is to verify your identity)
- Email it to the paper or submit via the paper's online portal, if available
- Be prepared to submit more as papers do not publish all of the LTEs they receive

BEST PRACTICES

- LTEs should be brief and to the point
- Make sure it clearly states what you are fighting for, why you're fighting for it, and why it's urgent now
- Use stats and facts wherever possible
- Use accessible and understandable language. How would you explain this to your mom? Your friend who doesn't pay attention to politics?
- Connect the letter to relevant news stories
- Include a clear call to action
- Follow up with the paper a week after submission to ask if they received it and be persistent
- If the LTE is not accepted, try again with a revised vision, different angle, etc.
- In general, papers are likely to publish 1 letter for every 5 they receive on a topic so getting friends to submit letters will make it more likely that the issue will be covered

OUTLINE

1. Establish who you are - "I'm a voter in Senate District 16"
2. State the problem - "Our corrupt political systems affect how much I pay for health insurance"
3. State the solution - "Senator Brown introduced legislation to..."
4. Provide any context - "The legislation would..."
5. Call to action - "I encourage everyone in district 16 to contact Senator... and let them know that they should support the legislation"

