

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A letter to the editor (LTE) is a letter sent to a publication about issues of concern from its readers. They are an excellent way to get media coverage, are short and usually easy to write, and have a good chance of being printed. They differ from Op-Eds and editorial pieces because they are more personal; you are sharing your own voice.

Elected officials often monitor newspapers to gauge local opinion. If you mention your elected officials by name and state the specific legislative action you would like them to take, your letter just might grab their attention. Here are some suggestions:

Keep it short

Limit your letter to 250 words or less and focus on a single issue. In the first paragraph briefly state your opinion – what is your main point? How are you personally invested in a particular policy or piece of legislation? In the second paragraph, provide facts, quotes, numbers, and/or a brief story. Use the last paragraph to restate your point and make your call to action!

Respond to a news story

Have your letter be a response to something previously printed. Open with a specific reference to a recent news story, editorial, or another letter. “Recent” means no older than a few days. For national papers, no older than 48 hours.

Make a local connection

Your letter will be of more interest to editors of your local paper if you highlight the local impact of an issue, even if it is a national or foreign policy issue. What effect does an issue have on your community? Be specific. Use local data.

Demonstrate your reach

If you know that your opinion also represents that of others, be sure to mention it. However, if you want to submit a letter signed on behalf of numerous groups or coalitions, be aware that most newspapers limit signatures to two or three names.

Consider your options

Submit letters to your local paper for the best chance of publication, though you may certainly try submitting it to national publications as well. Other options include magazines, local zines, online news sites, neighborhood papers, religious publications, college alumni magazines, etc.

Make sure to include your contact information!