



## Writing Letters to the Editor (LTEs)

Letters to the editor (LTEs) can be a powerful tool for educating and influencing your community and getting your legislators' attention. There are several reasons to write an LTE – 1) you are passionate about an issue that you want others to be aware of; 2) you are trying to influence public opinion or your legislators about an issue; 3) you want to spark a conversation in your community about an issue.

Letters to the editor can take a position for or against an issue, or simply inform, or both. Surveys show that letters to the editor are among the best-read portions of a newspaper or magazine.

The best way to get a letter published in a newspaper is to write in response to a news story or editorial soon after it is printed.

### Helpful Tips for Writing and Submitting a Letter to the Editor

- Include your name, address, email address and phone number at the top of your letter. Editors often require this information because they will need to verify your identity. You can state that this information is not to be published.
- Keep it short! Most publications prefer letters of 100 words or less. If you have trouble writing something that short (and it can be difficult), then write your first draft the way you want to, and ask a friend to cut it down.
- Use simple language; clearly explain why the issue is important. If you have a reasonable and specific suggestion on how to improve the situation, state this as concisely as possible.
- Always use your own words; never copy and paste a letter. If the editors get several identical letters, they will ignore them.
- Include the name of your state or federal legislators (depending on the issue) in the final sentence. Many legislators have online searches for anything that mentions their name, so this is a great way to make sure they read your letter!
- Proofread your letter, or ask a friend to help you proofread. Editors will ignore letters that contain bad grammar, are confusing, or are poorly written rants.
- Submit your letter by email if the publication allows it. This format enables the editor to cut and paste your letter.
- If there was an article published within the last few days that connects with the topic of your letter, be sure to reference it at the very beginning.

### Sample Letter to the Editor

*The article about the local poultry industry left out an important aspect: the corporatization of agriculture. A small handful of large companies control most of our food system, and they are often able to ensure that any regulations benefit them at the expense of everyone else. Consider the USDA's proposed rule for Animal Identification, which is designed to help those companies in their export marketing, but will require family farmers to officially identify both cattle and poultry if they cross state lines. I hope Congressman \_\_\_\_\_ will work to protect our small farmers from regulations written by and for the big corporations.*

*Submitted by Name, Street Address, City, State, Zip, Email, Phone (please do not publish my contact information)*

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