



Writing a Letter to the Editor

Letters-to-the-editor are vehicles for expressing an opinion and are an excellent way to increase public awareness about important issues. Encourage supporters in the area to write letters-to-the-editor expressing their views on a particular issue!

They should be used to:

- Rebut statements by groups or individuals.
- Provide audiences with information or a point of view you want them to know.
- Point out or correct misinformation.
- Connect local problems and concerns to specific votes/actions of the incumbent Congressperson.

Guidelines

Be brief. Your letter should be short, concise, and to the point. State your argument as briefly as possible in the letter's introduction. Check the word limit of your local paper; otherwise try not to exceed 150 words.

Be timely. The goal of your letter is to increase public awareness about a recent issue raised in a national or local newspaper. Respond to the article in the newspaper within two to three days, and no later than seven days, of the article's publication so you'll have greater chances of getting it published.

Be specific. Focus only on one issue or subject per letter at a time.

Cite. Be sure to cite the title and date of the article you are responding to within your first two sentences. Include facts and striking statistics to support your argument.

Get local. When writing about global issues think about how your local community is tied to and affected by the issue you are raising.

Proofread. Make sure your letter is organized in a logical manner. Check for spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors. Avoid personal attacks or clichéd language.

Provide contact information. The newspaper may need to contact you to make sure you wrote the piece, so be sure to include your name, address, e-mail, phone number, UNA-USA title or membership affiliation, and signature at the bottom of your letter. Only your name and town will be printed in the paper unless otherwise specified.



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Additional suggestions

- Try to view the letter from the reader's perspective. The terms used should be familiar to the average reader.
- Write in your own words and get your point across; the letter does not have to be perfect.
- Include names of prominent people or organizations who share your opinion to demonstrate the broad-based support for your position. Letters-to-the-editor can also be signed by more than one individual to show unity of opinion. Offer to draft a letter or a sample letter for appropriate persons to encourage them to submit as letters-to-the-editor.
- Do not be discouraged if your letter is not published, the more you write the greater the likelihood your thoughts will be printed.
- Consider submitting letters to your local free daily or weekly paper.
- Submitting your letter by fax could increase the chances of it being published; editors would rather receive a hard copy of the letter than be overwhelmed with e-mails.