

Letter to the Editor Guide

Writing letters to the editor (LTEs) is an effective way to take your message to a wide audience (at no cost!). Many decision makers read the editorial pages of their local newspapers more than almost any other section of the paper. All you need to get started is a strong opinion about an issue and a few supporting facts.

Ideally, to pitch your LTE, you are able to find an article that speaks to your issue. LTEs have a better chance of being published when they respond to current news articles, or other opinion articles. Think about how the main point of the article agrees with your opinion or how it differs. For example, an announcement from local or state elected officials on budget issues, where you could argue disability services should be prioritized or protected, or news about a local program, where you could argue your community needs more of that for people with disability but lacks sufficient funding or staffing. Or, any news article having to do with the current labor market or economy could be a chance to shed light on what you are facing.

You can also write a LTE without responding to a current article, but simply uplifting an issue you feel your local newspaper *isn't* covering and that the community needs to hear about. The guide below will give you a few important tips to help you write the letter. Remember, you do not have to be a policy expert; the strongest letters are about YOUR story and why the issue matters.

How to structure an LTE:

Introduce Yourself

- Your first sentence should refer to the article or editorial that you're going to be writing on, or begin with a bold assertive sentence to grab readers' attention.
- Provide a bit of relevant background information. For example - what your organization does in the community, your role and how long you have been doing it.

Share Your Story

- Briefly describe the issue and your point of view. Why is this important to you? What has your experience been? What about the experience of people in your community? Include facts and figures where you can.
- Brevity and directness is important. In the case of LTEs, it is the key to getting published. Be concise and limit your letter to one or two simple points. It will give your letter focus and improve your letter's chances of making the opinion page.

Close Powerfully

- End with a bold declaration of what your opinion is or what action you want to see elected officials, regulators, or other parties take.

Tips for getting your LTE placed:

Follow the rules

- Each newspaper has different guidelines for LTEs. **Most limit their size to 250-300 words or less.** By looking on your newspaper's website you can find an email address where LTE submissions should be sent.
- You should always include your full name, address and telephone number so that they can verify you are a resident (your personal details outside of your name will not be published).

Follow up with an assertive phone call

- “Hi, my name is ____ from ____ (neighborhood). I wanted to make sure you received my letter to the editor and would like to know when I will see it printed. Thank you for your attention.”