



Tips on Writing Letters to the Editor April 2008

Letters to the editor are great advocacy tools. Sending a letter to the editor can achieve a number of advocacy goals, including:

- reaching a large, dedicated reading audience;
- reaching public officials who often read the letters section;
- raising important information that often is not part of a news story on critical issues; and,
- creating the impression of widespread support for – or opposition to – an issue.

Six things to remember when writing a letter to the editor:

1. Keep it short and on one subject. Many newspapers have strict limits on the length of the letters they print and have limited space in which to publish them. Keeping your letter brief will help assure that your important points are not cut out by the newspaper in editing.
2. Make it legible. Your letter does not have to be fancy, but you should use a typewriter or computer word processor. Most newspapers now accept letters to the editor via email, a great convenience for the writer.
3. Send letters to weekly community newspapers as well as large daily papers. The smaller the newspaper's circulation, the easier it may be to get your letter published.
4. Include your contact information. Many newspapers will only print a letter to the editor after calling the author to verify that he or she wrote the submission. Newspapers do not give out that information, and will usually only print your name and city if the letter is published.
5. Make reference to the newspaper. While some papers publish general commentary, many will only print letters that refer to a specific article. Here are some examples of easy ways to refer to an article in your opening sentence.
 - . *I was disappointed to see that the Post's May 18 editorial "School Vouchers are Right On" omitted some key facts in the debate.*
 - . *I strongly disagree with (author's name) narrow view on women's reproductive rights. ("Name of Op-Ed" date)*
6. If you are writing about a particular public officials' position, **mention the public official**, for example:
 - . *I am deeply saddened to read that Congressman Doe is working to roll back affirmative action. (Title of Article, date)*

If you need any assistance, please contact:
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