



WRITING A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Letters to the editor can reflect community interest about a particular issue and send a message to policymakers that voters are paying attention to that issue. But what makes for a compelling letter, and increases the chance of getting published?

Letters should be short and punchy. Space is at a premium. And, if you are writing in response to an article or opinion piece, respond the same day as the piece is published. Consider what special interest you bring to the issue and what readers would like to know.

When writing a letter to the editor, keep the following tips in mind:

- **Respond quickly.** If you read or see something you want to respond to, send your letter by email (or use the news site's online form if they have one) the same day, or by the next day at the latest.
- **Mention your reason for writing, preferably in the first sentence.** Make it personal. If you are responding directly to an article you've read in the publication, state the article headline and publication date. If you are commenting on a local current event, be specific about the issue or event.
- **Limit the content to one or two key points.** A letter to the editor offers the chance to make a concise statement or argument, not an in-depth analysis.
- **Take a strong position.** If you can, offer a compelling fact that shows the urgency or importance of your issue. Include a call to action.
- **Mention an elected official by name where appropriate.** It is appropriate to call on an elected official to take a particular position. Using their name means it is more likely that the elected official or their staff will monitor the letter.
- **Make sure to include your full name and contact information.** You may be contacted to verify your identity before the letter is published.
- **Don't engage in personal attacks.** There is no need to make the attack on an elected official or writer.
- **Look up the editorial policies for each outlet you submit to.** Some have different word count restrictions or policies on how many letters they will accept from the same individual in a specific time period.
- **Don't send the same letter to competing publications.** Newspapers and magazines want to publish original content.