



CAMPAIGN COMMUNICATIONS TIPS

Talk Back: Write and submit a letter to the editor

Writing a letter to the editor is one of the best ways to respond to articles, editorials or op-eds published in your local paper. You can submit a letter to amplify a positive editorial, mitigate the damage caused by a harmful op-ed or highlight key information left out of an article.

The letters section is popular, and policy makers in particular pay close attention to letters that express the views of their constituents. The following are some tips for writing a successful letter to the editor.

Create a strategy and enforce accountability. The quality of letters is more important than the number we submit because good letters get published. Work to create a strategy for regular submission and tracking of LTEs.

Swift response. Timeliness is key. After you identify a story or editorial that needs a response, draft and submit your letter as soon as possible.

Read the letters section. Read letters to the editor published recently by the newspaper, and mirror their format.

Follow the rules. Look for guidelines about format, length and other requirements on the paper's Web site or printed in the paper near the letters section. If you can't find them, call the newspaper and ask. You don't want your letter to be rejected because you didn't follow the rules.

Brief is best. Keep your letter brief and to the point – focus on making one key point in two or three paragraphs, and use just a couple of key facts or statistics, or a very brief story, to support your argument.

Edit. Proofread carefully to eliminate typos and grammatical errors.

Letter to the Editor Check List

Before you submit a letter to the editor, check to make sure:

- You're under the newspaper's word limit (usually 200-300 words)
- Your letter responds to and directly mentions an article, editorial or op-ed that *recently* ran in the paper.
- You make one key point, rather than packing multiple points into your letter.
- You have included one or two carefully chosen facts, statistics or stories.
- You have not used any jargon, acronyms or insulting language.
- Your letter contains no spelling or grammatical errors.
- You have included the author's name, title, organization and contact information (telephone and email).