

MEDIA



Letter to the Editor Writing Guide



Your voice is a powerful one, so if you'd like to write your own letter to the editor (LTE), below are a few letter writing tips and talking points for you to keep in mind when drafting. Before submitting your LTE to your local paper, please share your letter with your staff partner so it can be run through the quick review process. As always, remember to share the good news with ACS CAN staff when your letter runs. We love to see your work in print!

Tips for Drafting LTEs:

- **Watch length:** Consider your word count – newspapers typically hold LTEs to a 150-250 word maximum, so be sure to check with the paper you're submitting the letter to ahead of time to make sure you're within the allowable word count.
- **Don't paraphrase:** Be careful not to paraphrase any responses given to you by the lawmaker during your visit. Stick to the facts of what happened that day – you met with your lawmaker and asked him/her to support specific legislation. Feel free to thank your Member of Congress or a state lawmaker in the LTE for taking the time to meet with you, but you should not elaborate with any summary of how the meeting went or what they said.
- **Be you:** What you bring to the discussion that no one else can is your personal story and how passing legislation like the bills you're asking your lawmaker to support can impact real people. Briefly explain why the legislation you're focusing on in your letter matters to you.
- **Get local:** Remember to localize your letter. Editors are looking to show how bigger issues impact your local area. Consider sharing the number of people in your state that are diagnosed with cancer each year, or submitting the LTE to the local paper of the lawmaker you met with in order to localize your message.
- **Keep it simple:** The person reading your letter once it's published may have never heard of this issue before, so write your letter as if you're explaining it to your neighbor for the first time. Avoid acronyms or "inside ballgame" type of language like bill numbers. (Bill numbers are important for lawmakers but not to the average newspaper reader.)
- **Pick one fact:** Try to stick to one key fact. Because we're so passionate about these issues, we have a lot of information on them. But if you give too many stats and facts, they won't stick with your reader. Pick the one or two you think are the most powerful, and make your case with those.
- **Make the ask:** Always include a call to action. Remember to let readers know what you're asking your lawmaker to support and why.
- **Submit once:** Don't submit the same letter to multiple newspapers in the same market – editors don't like to see something from their paper printed in a competing paper and it may hurt your chances of getting published now and in the future.



Getting More Mileage from Your Letter to the Editor

Letters to the Editor (LTEs) are an easy way to get your message out to lawmakers—and with a few simple steps, we can make sure every LTE has an even boarder impact than it otherwise would.

STEP ONE: Increase the likelihood your letter gets published with a simple phone call.

HOW? 1-2 days after you have submitted your letter, call the paper where it was submitted and confirm that it has been received, ask if they have any questions, or if there are any edits you could make that would increase the chance of being published.

STEP TWO: Share your letter once it has been published. Getting a letter published gets our issues on the reader's radar—but to be most effective, we need to get that issue on the lawmaker's radar.

HOW? Facebook, Twitter & even snail mail! Once your letter has been published, let your Grassroots staff partner know. Then, post a link on your Facebook page and/or Tweet it. Make sure to tag your lawmaker/target in your post and, if possible, tag the paper where it was published. Some examples:

My letter asking @lawmaker to support [issue/campaign] was published in today's @newspaper—read it here: www.website.org

So glad @newspaper published my letter calling on @lawmaker to support [issue/campaign]. Check it out here: www.website.org

I hope @lawmaker reads my letter in @newspaper thanking him/her for voting in support of [issue/bill] last week. Check it out here: www.website.org

Don't have social media? That's fine, too—snail mail works just as well! Print a copy of your letter and mail it to your lawmaker's district office with a quick note. Example:

"Dear Senator Jones,

I wanted to make sure you saw my recent letter in the [newspaper name], enclosed here. As a constituent and cancer advocate, I hope you'll support this bill.

Sincerely,

[Name]

Volunteer, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN)"

STEP THREE: You're done, and you're on your way to making sure your letter has a wide-spread impact!

HOW? Remember your Grassroots staff partner and media advocacy team are here to help. Let us know if you need assistance with contact info for your local paper, locating a mailing address for your lawmaker or identifying the lawmaker or newspaper's social media tags.

Questions? Contact Amber Herting at Amber.Herting@cancer.org or Melissa Stacy

Advocacy and Social Media



Why Social Media?:

- Use it to grow our network
 - ◇ Get the word out about ACS CAN and the issues we're working on
 - ◇ Help recruit new volunteers
 - ◇ New action takers on our campaigns

Social Media Ideas for Recruitment:

- You have a powerful story
 - ◇ Share why you volunteer
 - ◇ Talk about your experience with ACS CAN
- Tell others how to get involved
 - ◇ Include an action step
 - ◇ Or a way to find out additional information

Tips and Tricks to Improve Your Posts:

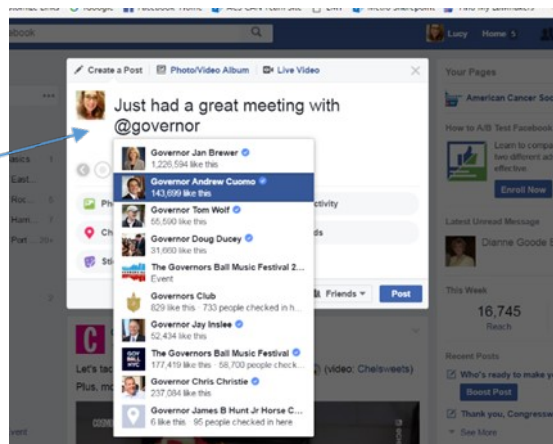
- Pictures!
 - ◇ Drive engagement
 - ◆ Photos and other images 40 times more likely to get shared on social media
 - ◇ Get more interaction
 - ◆ Posts with an image get 179% more interactions than the average FB post
 - ◇ Help you share your message
 - ◆ Pictures grab their attention, and can illustrate or add to the accompanying post
 - ◇ Tips:
 - ◆ Keep it simple!
 - ◆ Use impactful pictures
- Use Hashtags!
 - ◇ Makes your post part of a larger conversation
 - ◇ Spreads the word about a campaign or issue



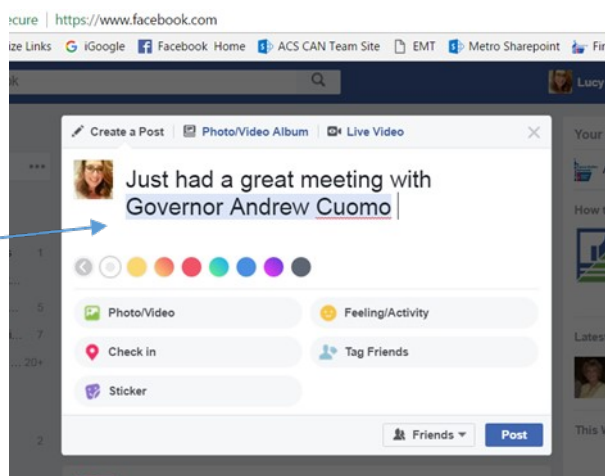
How to tag your lawmaker on Social Media

How to tag your lawmaker on Facebook:

1. Begin to type in your post
2. When you're ready to add your lawmaker type in the "@" and begin to type in his/her name
3. As you type after the "@" a dropdown menu will appear and you will see several people/pages that you can select.



4. Choose the person/page you'd like to tag.

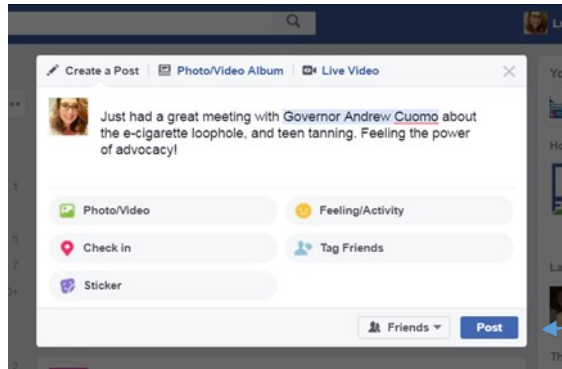


5. The name of the person/page you just tagged should turn blue. If it does not, the tagging did not work correctly, and you'll need to try again. ***You must be friends with or follow the person you want to tag***
6. Finish typing your post

How to tag your lawmaker on Social Media

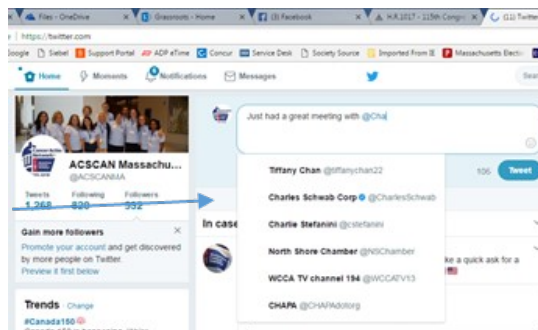


7. Hit “Post” and you’re done! It’s that easy.

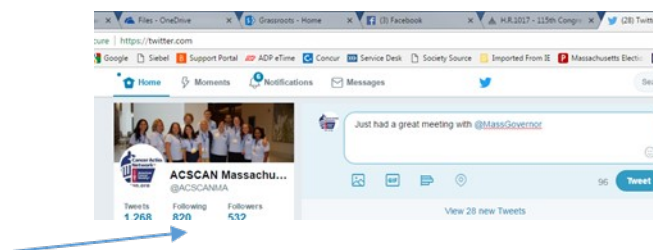


How to tag your lawmaker on Twitter:

1. Begin to type in your post
2. When you’re ready to add your lawmaker type in the “@” and begin to type in his/her Twitter handle
3. As you type after the “@” a dropdown menu will appear and you will see several people that you can select.



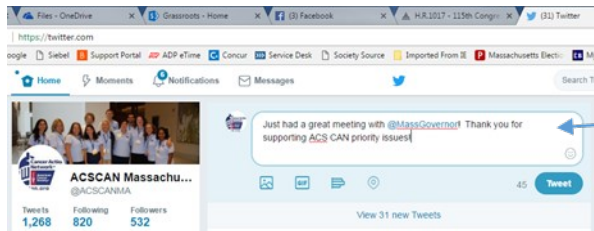
4. Choose the person/page you’d like to tag.





How to tag your lawmaker on Social Media

5. The name of the person/page you just tagged should turn blue. If it does not, the tagging did not work correctly, and you'll need to try again. Finish typing your post
6. Hit "Post" and you're done! It's that easy.



Massachusetts Lawmakers



State/District	Title and Name	Facebook	Instagram	Twitter
CT - 02	Rep. Joe Courtney	@JoeCourtney	RepJoeCourtney	@RepJoeCourtney
	Sen. Ed Markey	@edmarkey		@edmarkey
	Sen. Elizabeth Warren	@senatorelizabethwarren		@senwarren
MA CD	Rep.			
	State Sen.			
	State Rep.			



Twitter and Advocacy

Why Twitter Matters:

Twitter is a fast, effective way to get the message out on why our issues are important. And it is the most effective way to directly advocate to lawmakers in a public way—adding accountability to their actions.

To be successful, we need tweets from individuals in addition to organizations.

Setting Up an Account:

1. Go to <http://twitter.com> and find the sign up box, or go directly to <https://twitter.com/signup>.
2. Enter your full name, email, and a password.
3. Enter the phone number that you would like to associate with your Twitter account. Twitter will call you with a verification code.
4. Click “sign up” for Twitter.
5. Choose a profile name—ideally your full name or part of it. You can use the underscore (“_”)!
6. Choose a profile picture. A real picture of you will make it easier for people to relate to you. People want to talk to a person, not a brand. Don’t leave the default “egg” picture there!
7. Write your bio in under 240 characters. Make it inviting and interesting. Make sure to include your location in your profile.
8. Follow people. Choose people who will likely take interest in what you’re doing.
9. Start tweeting! An easy way to start is to follow other accounts (news outlets, advocacy groups) and retweet them.
10. Check your mentions often. When you tweet people (mention them or retweet them), they can tweet back. You may get a notification via email, and also notifications are noted on your homepage—the “notifications” section at the top will light up with your number of new interactions.

Using Twitter to Influence Lawmakers:

According to a recent study by the Congressional Management Foundation, fewer than 30 constituent tweets are enough to influence a legislator, especially when inboxes are overflowing with emails and you’ve already reached out by phone.

How to Advocate on Twitter:

- Use the “@” sign before a lawmaker’s twitter handle to “tag” the lawmaker and notify him or her of your tweet. (Be sure to place a period before the “@” sign if the lawmaker tag is the first word in the tweet, otherwise it will not appear on your account as a tweet.)
- Every time you tag a lawmaker in a tweet, that person is sent a push notification, allowing them to see the tweet directly in their account.
- Use the hashtag given to you by your grassroots manager in all your tweets. Hashtags aggregate all advocacy and highlight our collective voice.