



Best Practices for 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 increase the likelihood of your LTE getting placed and make sure it has a broader impact once it does!

BEFORE SUBMITTING...

Understand the submission criteria. Make sure you know where to send your LTE and the specific word count you need to stick to. Before submitting, check out the tone and context of other LTEs. Are they published daily or weekly? Are there any commonalities among them that you can include in yours? If you need help in this regard, reach out to your media advocacy manager. Make sure your grassroots manager and media advocacy manager know what paper you are submitting to.

Keep it personal and local. Make sure you are using local statistics and your personal story to better illustrate your point. Always make the connection to a recent event or a recent article to make the piece timely. Include your title as well as your name – it adds credibility and relevance that will increase the likelihood of your letter being placed.

WHEN SUBMITTING...

Make sure the editor knows who you are and how to contact you. Editors may want to contact you so make sure your name, home address and the best number to reach you are listed. When submitting your LTE, make sure they know early on in the e-mail who you are and your purpose. Include the editor's name, your purpose and your appreciation for the paper. For example:

To (name of editor) at the (paper),

Recently, I read the (paper)'s recent piece on the state of tobacco funding prevention efforts in (state). I'm thankful for the (paper)'s superb reporting of proposed state budget cuts and bills have kept residents like myself informed. As a volunteer with the American Cancer Society's Cancer Action Network, I'm worried our community doesn't understand the history and importance of securing funding to reduce the number of lives lost to cancer.

Last year at this time, I expressed similar concerns when I submitted my letter to you during Cancer Action Week. I'm happy to make any edits that would improve my chances of being placed this time around. Thank you in advance for your consideration!



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AFTER SUBMITTING...

Increase the likelihood your letter gets published with a simple phone call. 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 it being published.

Don't be discouraged if it doesn't. Especially with bigger papers that have competing space for LTEs, there is never a guarantee to be published. A lot of factors play into placement including what topics are leading the conversation at that time. If another big topic is taking over the airwaves, discuss the possibility of submitting a revamped LTE a week or two later with your media advocacy manager.

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. 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: (insert link) @acscan_Florida

So glad @newspaper published my letter calling on @lawmaker to support [issue/campaign]. Check it out here: (insert link) @acscan_Florida

I hope @lawmaker reads my letter in @newspaper thanking him/her for voting in support of [issue/bill] last week. (insert link) @acscan_Florida

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. For 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)”

Don't forget to also share with family and friends!

You're done, and you're on your way to making sure your letter has a widespread impact!

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.