



Guide to Writing an Impactful Letter to the Editor (LTE)

One of the most influential parts of newspapers is the “letters to the editor” (LTE) section on topics of the day. Research shows that a well-written, authentic LTE by ordinary citizens can help to persuade editors, readers, and decision makers—who carefully monitor the content of LTE to gauge public opinion.

Writing an LTE is a meaningful and easy way to advocate for public policies. They can be a challenge to write because of space constraints. That’s why we’ve provided tips to help you write and submit your letter to the editor.

Why write a LTE?

- LTEs tell decision-makers at newspapers what issues their readers care about. This encourages them to focus more attention on those issues.
- Elected officials and their staffs pay close attention to the LTE section. This is particularly true when their names are mentioned.
- The volume of letters matter; more letters means that more LTE on this topic will be published.
- LTEs educate the public on our issues

Getting Started

- Find the LTE submission instructions on your local newspaper’s website (usually under Opinions section)
- Check the word count guidelines (generally 150-250 words)

Structuring Your LTE

1. First sentence: Explain what it is you’re writing about and why it’s important.
2. Next, tell a brief personal story involving the issue. A few facts/stats are good to include as support, but people remember authentic stories.
3. Then explain why it matters to you, your family, business, or community.
4. Close with asking readers to take specific action

General Tips

- Assume your audience knows little or nothing about this issue.
- Keep your message to no more than three important points.
- Your letter is more likely to be printed if you can link it to a recent article published in the paper.
- Ask people to take specific action
 - Example: contact the decision maker, sign a petition, vote, testify, & etc.)
- Tell your personal story and explain why the issue is important to your community.
- Consider submitting to smaller local papers, not just the nearest big city paper. Smaller circulation papers are often in need of editorial content.
- Letters should be creative, written with passion and, if possible, personal.
- Note: many newspapers require personal info (name, address). This info will not be published. They will most likely contact you to ensure that the letter was written by you and to notify you that it will be published soon.

After Submitting:

1. If you haven't seen your letter published, calling the paper and asking if they plan on publishing the letter can put it on their radar and often get it published!
- If you would like feedback on your LTE, email advocacy@solarunitedneighbors.org.

SAMPLE LTE

Title: I'm part of the National Solar Tour, Sept. 28 - Oct. 2!

With all that's challenging us in 2020, there's one thing I'm looking forward to: hosting a virtual solar tour as part of the 25th Annual National Solar Tour!

Solar United Neighbors (SUN) has put together a week of online programming for anyone interested in learning about solar.

I'll be featured in a video about my [home/business's] solar system. I went solar in [year] because [reason]. It was a great decision and I want others in [city/region] to be able to learn from my experience!

Whether you're new to the idea of going solar, or you're a solar homeowner looking to "level up" with battery storage or an electric vehicle charger, the National Solar Tour is a free and pressure-free way to learn more.

Register at www.NationalSolarTour.org to learn about my solar system and others all over the country!

Title: With fires burning across the west, I am glad to see the power of solar!
In response to: [Wildfires Bring New Devastation Across the West](#), The New York Times