

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR SUGGESTIONS

Letters to the editor are great advocacy tools. After you write letters to your members of Congress, sending letters to the editor can achieve other advocacy goals because they:

- reach a large audience
- are often monitored by elected officials
- can bring up information not addressed in a news article
- create an impression of widespread support for, or opposition to, an issue

Keep letters short and to one subject. Many newspapers have strict limits on the length of letters and have limited space to publish them. Keeping your letter brief will help assure that your important points are not cut out by the newspaper. Use the Tips on Writing to our Elected Officials as a guide.

Make it legible. Your letter doesn't have to be fancy, but you should use a typewriter or word processor if your handwriting is difficult to read.

Send letters to weekly community newspapers too. The smaller the newspaper's circulation, the easier it is to get your letter printed.

Be sure to include your contact information. Many newspapers will only print a letter to the editor after calling the author to verify his or her identity and address. Newspapers will not give out that information, and will usually only print your name and city should your letter be published.

Make references to the newspaper. While some papers print general commentary, many will only print letters that refer to a specific article. Here are some examples of easy ways to refer to articles in your opening sentence:

"I was disappointed to see that The Post's May 18 editorial 'School Vouchers Are Right On' omitted some of the key facts in the debate."

"I strongly disagree with (author's name) narrow view on women's reproductive rights."
(Name or Op-Ed, date)

"I am deeply saddened to read that Congressman Doe is working to roll back affirmative action." ("Title of Article," date)