WRITING A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Letters to the editor (LTEs) are short written responses to recent editorials or stories, sent to publications by their readers. LTEs are a vehicle for public response to current news. Authors of LTEs often seek to offer an opinion about another piece, solicit action, or correct a perceived error. As with writing an op-ed, you can impact the opinions of other citizens and legislators with a persuasive letter to the editor. The letters to the editor section is one of the most widely read parts of the paper! The next time you’re feeling fired up about something you’ve read, use these guidelines to draft an effective letter to the editor.

QUICK RESPONSE

Your LTE should be submitted within 2-3 days of the news to which it responds. Look up the submission guidelines and contact information specific to your local paper. It is important to follow these guidelines as doing so will increase the likelihood of getting your letter published. Make sure to reference the newspaper and the specific article by title, publication date, and author to which your letter responds.

SHORT AND SUCCINCT

An effective letter to the editor should be no longer than 100-150 words. Keep your letter on-point and concise, focusing on a specific argument or response to a piece. An overreliance on statistics will overwhelm your main point. Use only relevant facts and try to draw personal and local connections to the issue. Conclude your letter by stating ways to address the issue. If you’re responding to an information policy issue, we encourage you to contact the Government Relations Office; we’d be happy to provide talking points and suggestions.

IDENTIFY YOURSELF

As always, it’s important to include your contact information: name, day and evening phone numbers, address, and email address. Make sure to specify any relevant qualifications you have that relate to the issue, including job title, leadership roles, and affiliations.