

Letter to the Editor Guidelines

Have a strong feeling about something you read? Write a letter to the editor or (if a commentary) contact the writer. Letters exist to provide a forum for public comment or debate. A letter to the editor is meant to express your opinion or point of view.

GUIDELINES FOR LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

- * Be **TIMELY**: Write your letter within a day of the article's date.
- * **INCLUDE CONTACT INFORMATION**: Include your full name, city, state, phone # (many news organizations will call you to verify you really wrote the letter - most will not print anonymous letters).
- * **BE CLEAR**: Make one main point.
- * **BE CONCISE**: 1- 3 paragraphs, 3-8 sentences, 40-100 words. Short letters show confidence in your position.
- * **BE ACCURATE**: Letters that are factually inaccurate are not printed.
- * **BE INTERESTING**: Get your reader's attention and keep it to the end of your letter. Open with an interesting fact or strong statement and keep your points as interesting as possible.
- * **AVOID PERSONAL ATTACKS**: Show respect for the opposite opinion. Being rude may cause people to disagree with you on principle.
- * **PROOFREAD**: Re-read your letter. Check for grammar and spelling mistakes. If possible, ask another person to read your letter for accuracy and clarity.
- * **DON'T WORRY IF YOUR LETTER IS NOT PRINTED**: If it is well-written it might not be printed if it addresses the same issue as letters already printed.
- * **DON'T NEGLECT SMALLER NEWSPAPERS**: They will often provide more coverage than the large ones.

In your email, use the following format: Be certain to stay within their guidelines (number of words, subject, etc.)

HEADING

To the Editor: (If writing directly to the writer Substitute Dear Mr./Ms. ___)
Re: "headline", Date of article

BODY

1-3 paragraphs

CLOSING

Your full name

City, State

Your Phone # (Only if requested by news organization)

For sample letters, see the website of your local or regional paper

Read several letters from the site you are writing to for an idea of the types of letters that the editors print.

Use the following link – type in the info requested to find talking points, more tips and newspaper links:

<http://www.americansolutions.com/TakeAction/WriteNewspapers/Default.aspx>

Another good resource for talking points: www.nfrw.org

NFRW LETTER-TO-THE-EDITOR CAMPAIGN

10 STEPS THAT WILL GET YOUR LETTER PUBLISHED

Do we want an Obama Administration? No! That is why NFRW is sponsoring a letter-to-the-editor campaign entitled, *Focus on Election 2008*! We are asking all our members to write letters to their local newspapers on issues important to you! A letter to the editor provides an excellent opportunity for you to advocate a message in your own words. Follow 10 steps that will get your letter published.



If your letter gets published, please notify NFRW at political@nfrw.org for possible use in our newsletters and magazine. Good luck, and get out an important message!

- 1. Make sure to use talking points:** [NFRW offers weekly talking points](#) that will help you establish your letter! www.gop.com and www.johnmccain.com also offers talking points online.
- 2. Make sure it has an interesting opening:** Your first sentence should capture the attention of the editor. Additionally, the first sentence needs to explain why you are writing!
- 3. Make it short:** Generally speaking use less than 200 words. Newspapers limit the number of words that can be printed in each section.
- 4. Make it simple:** Pick one topic, stay focused and on-point.
- 5. Make it personal:** Tell the editor how this affects you, your family, your community, etc.
- 6. Make it relevant and timely:** Write a letter that is relevant! Make sure you are responding to a current event.
- 7. Make sure you check your grammar and spelling:** Check to make sure your spelling is correct and that the submission is grammatically accurate.
- 8. Make sure to include contact information:** Always include your contact information. All too often special interest groups are sending form letters to the editor. Make it known that you are a concerned citizen.
- 9. Make sure you submit it multiple ways:** Be savvy, use e-mail, fax and mail to get your message delivered. You can find contact information by going to <http://www.gop.com/ActionCenter/WriteNewspapers/>
- 10. Follow up:** Call them to follow up on your letter.

Did Your Letter Get Published?

If your letter gets published, please notify NFRW at political@nfrw.org for possible use in our newsletters and magazine. Good luck, and get out an important message!

Need More Talking Points?

[Click Here](#)