

HOW TO WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

A large part of being a person of faith is living into the "already-but-not-yet." Our work toward beloved community is a small but marvelous glimpse of what is to come. While we are fighting against injustice, it is important to also remind ourselves and others — including our members of Congress — what we are working toward. One way you can get your position heard by your community and your legislators is by writing a letter to the editor in your local newspaper.

WHAT IS A LETTER TO THE EDITOR?

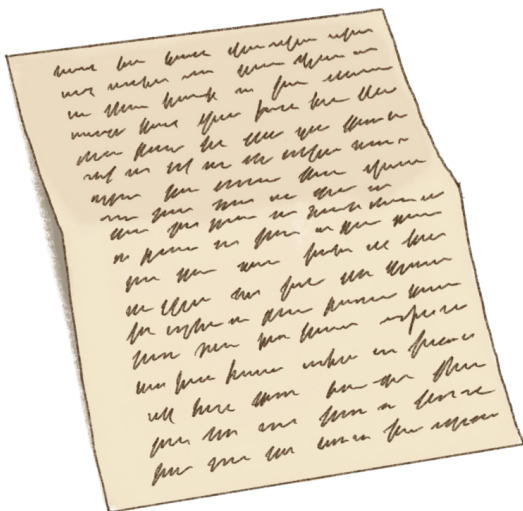
A letter to the editor is a short opinion piece written by readers of a newspaper, often in response to a specific article published by that newspaper. Your members of Congress and their staff read their local papers, and what happens in your region affects how they act on proposed legislation. For example, if your legislator sees a reporter discussing the need for investment in natural disaster responses in your region, it can be even more impactful if it is paired with a letter to the editor from one of their constituents calling on them to take action and support their district!



WHY WOULD MY MEMBER OF CONGRESS CARE ABOUT WHAT I HAVE TO SAY?

As a constituent, your opinion matters significantly to your legislator, as they need your vote to secure their position and rely on your opinions to make decisions in Congress. Members of Congress and their staff check the news every morning, and pay close attention to issues in their district or news that mentions them by name. If a constituent is praising them or calling them out for not keeping their promises, they are sure to take notice and react to it.

Your voice can not only influence your legislators, but also other constituents, causing your member of Congress to lose or gain support and make a change!



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HERE'S A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

1

DECIDE WHAT LOCAL NEWSPAPER YOU WANT TO WRITE FOR, AND LOOK UP ITS SUBMISSION GUIDELINES FOR LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

- You can search "[name of newspaper] letter to the editor criteria."
- Note the word limit!
- Follow the guidelines on whether to include your name, address, phone number, and email address.
- Ensure you submit the letter properly (i.e., webpage form, email, etc.).



TIP:

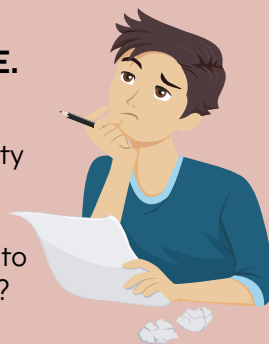
- Metro newspapers are usually large and print daily issues. Community or suburban newspapers focus on smaller regions and often publish less frequently. Figure out which is a right fit for your topic.
- Don't submit the same letter to multiple newspapers if you're responding to a story that ran in both. Submit your letter to the editor to one outlet at a time on the same topic, since they will often require a statement that you're exclusively submitting to their publication.



2

FIGURE OUT YOUR ANGLE.

- What issues are especially prevalent in your community right now?
- How can you take advantage of the moment to get your position out there?



TIP:

- Look for recent articles in the newspaper that pertain to your topic so that you can appeal to that audience and match the tone of the paper!
- Look at similar letters to the editor to get a feel for what the paper typically publishes and for ideas on how to begin your letter.

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3

START WRITING AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

You want your letter to the editor to get published while the issue is still relevant!



TIP:

- If you are responding to an article, make sure it was published recently! Try and respond to an article either the same day or the day after it was published. Make sure you are responding to an article published in the same paper. They want to hear your response to their article.
- Weekly papers also often accept writing about something prevalent to the community.
- Mention your member of Congress by name. This will help get their attention!
- Letters to the editor are not only useful to condemn an action by your member of Congress—they can also be written to PRAISE them when they do something you support. Legislators love to be reassured that the work they're doing is helping their constituents, and this positive reinforcement can encourage them to do more for their district!
- Reflect on what God is doing in your life and communities, and how your member of Congress may be encouraged and invited into this work if they are not already.

While it takes a little more effort than calling your members of Congress, writing a letter to the editor will help get your position on an issue out into the community and make your issue more memorable to legislators. If you've never gotten anything published in your local newspaper before — or even if you have — it can be easy to be intimidated by the process. However, as a community member and person of faith, your perspective is extremely valuable. You got this!



We also want to hear about your experience writing a letter to the editor. Did you get your letter published? Share it with us on social media [@SojoAction](#) or via email at sojoaction@sojo.net!

Looking for a community of faith that cares deeply about justice and works to build a better world together? Join the Faith-Rooted Advocates Network! Learn more at sojo.net/FRAN.