

# Submitting a Letter to the Editor

Writing a letter to the editor (LTE) of your local or regional newspaper is a quick and effective way to reach a targeted audience. Members of Congress keep a close eye on media coverage back home and look to the letters page to keep their finger on the ‘pulse’ of their constituents.

**Here are tips to help you write and place an effective letter:**

1. **Respond to an article in the paper or a recent or upcoming event.** Papers are most likely to print a response to an article that ran within the past two or three days. Begin by citing the original story by name, date, and author. Or, if a vote is coming up in Congress or an event is sparking your reaction, lead with that.
2. **Follow the paper’s directions.** Information on how to submit an LTE is usually found on the letters page. Typically, you will complete a web form or send an email. **Be sure to include your contact information for verification.**
3. **Keep your letter short, focused, and interesting.** Defer to the directions for maximum length, but the shorter the letter the better chance it will be placed. If the paper calls for 200 words or less, aim for 150 words. Lead with your main point and follow with your personal experience or expertise.
4. **Make it personal and share your expertise.** If you have an experience or qualifications relevant to the topic, be sure to include that. If you are a payday borrower writing about a payday loan, a consumer advocate writing about fair credit reporting, or you are a college student and you are writing about student loans—share that information up front.
5. **Name names!** Congressional staffers are tasked with tracking mentions of their lawmakers, so mention them by name to be certain your letter is seen by the staff in Washington, D.C..
6. **Write the letter in your own words.** Sample letters and templates are great tools to spark creativity, but be sure to make the letter your own. Editors want to hear your unique perspective.
7. **Follow-up with your legislator.** If your letter is printed, email the clip or even take a copy of the paper over to their office and share it in person.