

How to Write a Letter to the Editor

WHY:

You have a powerful tool to influence your elected officials: your personal story.

One of the most effective ways to share your story with your elected officials and immediate community is to write a letter to the editor (LTE) of your local paper. Lawmakers and their staffers read these letters to see what constituents like you care most about. In addition, writing a letter can help inspire other people in your community to join your campaign.

HOW:

Step 1: Select your LTE topic. Usually this should be whatever the most timely and impactful message coming out of the campaign you are working with is. For example, If you are working to pass Ranked Choice Voting in your community, and the campaign priority is to educate voters about RCV ahead of the election, you'll want to write your letter explaining RCV and give folks the information they need to vote for it.

Step 2: Find publications to submit your letter!

The next step in submitting a letter to the editor is identifying what publications you would like to pursue. We strongly recommend selecting papers that you yourself are familiar with and have a big enough readership to make an impact. Any papers with a niche audience, like your local town's biggest outlet or a university publication are great choices because it will allow you to tailor your letter to a very specific group of folks.

Once you've identified papers you'd like to submit to, search for links to their online submission forms and review the steps necessary to submit your letter.

[General tips before you start writing](#)

Step 3: Now you're ready to write your letter.

- **Choose your [angle](#)**

Choose an angle for your letter so it has a specific point of view. You can keep your letter general, focused on the conflict of interest within our current political system, and mention all of the great benefits included in the policy you are advocating for.

Or you can choose a specific angle to approach in your letter, like speaking from the point of view of your occupation, community role or other identities.

- **Write your hook**

Your hook is the 1-2 sentence start of your letter – it should introduce your focus and angle and entice the reader to keep going.

- **Write the body of your letter**

The body should be 5-6 sentences where you can make the case and give supporting details to enhance your argument or story. Make sure to write your body with your target audience in mind.



- **End with a clear ask**
Give a next step for the campaign and explain what we need to see happen, i.e. “Senator/Representative should support XX in congress” or “Senator X should continue to work hard to pass XX” if they are already supportive.
- **Step 4: Submit!!**
Submit your letters and look out for confirmation that you’ll be published. Here are a few extra tips to increase your likelihood of getting published:
 - » Check to see how the paper receives LTEs - you can usually find this info by googling your paper’s name with “LTE submission”.
 - » Make sure you include all info the paper requires (contact info, address, etc.)
 - » Be on the lookout for a phone call/email from the paper
 - » A timely subject will increase your chances of getting your letter published. You can reference a recently published editorial, other LTEs, an event in the news, or a national campaign that you’re responding to.
 - » Make it personal and bring it home for the audience. How does this affect people in your community? Why does this matter?
 - » Follow up with an email or phone call after 3-7 days if you haven’t heard anything. These bumps can sometimes be a HUGE x-factor in getting published.

SAMPLE LETTER:

This is from a recent push to pass a Stock Ban bill through Congress. This is a federal law, so make sure to adapt this template to your city or state based campaign.

In order for our government to function, voters need to trust that lawmakers have their best interests at heart. Right now, we all know the trust just isn’t there. One major reason why is that we continue to allow members of Congress to trade stocks while in office – with little oversight and accountability.

Passing legislation to address this serious conflict of interest is exactly what we need to restore public confidence in our government. The great news is right now, there are multiple opportunities to get this done. Both the Ending Trading and Holdings in Congressional Stocks (ETHICS) Act will address this serious conflict of interest and restore public confidence in Congress.

A stock trading ban has overwhelming bipartisan support among the public. Passing it is a no-brainer and would be a first step in rebuilding trust. Recent polling shows that 70% of voters across the political spectrum support banning Members of Congress from holding individual stocks. And now those same Americans including conservatives, moderates and progressives are rallying behind a congressional stock ban push.

It’s time for our elected officials to follow suit and end this conflict of interest. Senator/Representative XXXX should support congressional stock ban legislation.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]