

How to write a Letter to the Editor

Op-ed pieces and letters to the editor in your local press amplify the issues you care about and promote support in your community. Congressional offices monitor local media, so it's an effective way to put your issue in front of your members of Congress.

Step One—Identify the newspaper

Choose a local print or online newspaper with which you are familiar. Read recent articles and letters to the editor to get a feel for the tone, topics of interest and audience, and to understand the newspaper's preferred letter style and format.

Step Two—Learn submission requirements

Visit the newspaper's website or call them directly to request submission guidelines, which can vary from newspaper to newspaper. The information is often found in the "Contact Us" section on most websites. Pay close attention to these details to increase the likelihood of your letter being published. Is there a word count limit? How does the newspaper want you to submit the letter—an online form? Email? Do they have other guidelines or ask for personal information?

Step Three—Find your angle

Determine how you want to frame your letter. Responding to a previous article or letter published by the newspaper and/or connecting the issue to your local community are effective angles or entry points.

Step Four—Write your letter

Sticking to the guidelines you researched and using resources from Catholic Relief Services, explain the issue and why it matters to you and your local community. Make it personal by including a story or referencing your own experience. Stay within the word count if there is one.

Step Five—Make the ask

Remember to include a call to action for your readers. You explained why this issue is important—now encourage them to act on it. Depending on your letter, you could consider urging readers to contact their members of Congress to support your issue. Or—if your member of Congress has taken action to support your issue—you could show your appreciation and thank them for their work.

Step Six—Review and edit

Edit your letter for typos and clarity, and ask a friend, family member or colleague to review it, too.

Step Seven—Submit, share and celebrate!

Submit your letter to the newspaper and—once published—send it to your family, friends and community. Share it on your social media channels and tag your members of Congress. Let CRS staff know and celebrate that you took an impactful action to support our global family.