



# Guide to Writing an Impactful Letter to the Editor (LTE)

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One of the most influential parts of newspapers is the “letters to the editor” (LTE) section on topics of the day. Research shows that a well-written, authentic LTE by ordinary citizens can help to persuade editors, readers, and decision makers—who carefully monitor the content of LTE to gauge public opinion.

Writing an LTE is a meaningful and easy way to advocate for public policies. They can be a challenge to write because of space constraints. That’s why we’ve provided tips to help you write and submit your letter to the editor.

## Why write an LTE?

- LTEs tell decision-makers at newspapers what issues their readers care about. This encourages them to focus more attention on those issues.
- Elected officials and their staffs pay close attention to the LTE section. This is particularly true when their names are mentioned.
- The volume of letters matter; more letters means that more LTE on this topic will be published.
- LTEs educate the public on our issues.

## Getting Started

- Find the LTE submission instructions on your local newspaper’s website
- Check the word count guidelines (generally 150-250 words)

## General Tips

- Assume your audience knows little or nothing about this issue.
- Keep your message to no more than three important points.
- Your letter is more likely to be printed if you can link it to a recent article or LTE published in the same paper.
- Ask people to take specific action (for example: contact the decision maker, sign a petition, vote, testify, & etc....)
- Tell your personal story and explain why the issue is important to your community.
- Editors prefer to run letters from submitters who live in the paper’s coverage area.
- If you have a relevant professional or organizational credential, include that in your submission.
- Note: many newspapers require personal info (name, address, phone number) with letters. This info will not be published. They will most likely contact you to ensure that the letter was written by you and to notify you that it will be published soon.
- Consider submitting to smaller local papers, not just the nearest big city paper. Smaller circulation papers are often in need of editorial content.

- Letters should be creative, written with passion and, if possible, personal.

## Structuring Your LTE

- The first sentence should explain what it is you're writing about and why it's important.
- Next, tell a brief personal story involving the issue. A few facts/stats are good to include as support, but people remember authentic stories.
- Then explain why it matters to you, your family, business, or community.
- Always name the decision maker(s) and what you want them to do.
  - "I'm counting on Governor Northam to protect our solar rights by signing xx bill into law."
- Close with asking readers to take specific action (e.g. contact the decision maker, vote on Nov. 6, etc.....).
- If you would like feedback on your LTE, email [advocacy@solarunitedneighbors.org](mailto:advocacy@solarunitedneighbors.org).
- For resources and talking points on solar policy issues, access [Solar United Neighbors' Learn the Issues page here](#).

## Spreading the Word

- After your LTE is published, share on your Facebook, twitter, and other social media feeds.
- Recruit others to submit their own LTEs on the same topic.
- Send the link to your LTE to the decision-makers and ask them to respond.

## SAMPLE LTE

Columbus Dispatch; June 10, 2020

Letter: Net-metering rules protect consumer, alternative energy

My family installed a rooftop solar array in 2017. We did so because it was the right thing to do for the environment and producing our own energy lowers our electric bill. The majority of what we produce during the day goes out to the grid and is used by others. We receive credit from the electric utility for the power we contribute to the grid and draw on that credit at night when we are not producing.

This net-metering arrangement, used by over 49 states and territories, makes it possible to afford going solar.

Eliminating net metering would discourage millions from investing in solar systems, depriving all of us of the economic, environmental and public health benefits of solar energy. This could happen if the New England Ratepayers Association, a group representing utility interests, has its way.

It has petitioned the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC Docket EL20-42) to eliminate states' rights to set energy policy, including net metering, and give that right to the federal government. A change in net-metering rules would mean the loss of many good-paying solar jobs. With unemployment at high levels due to COVID-19, this is the last thing we need.

I urge Gov. Mike DeWine to let FERC know that Ohio is against NERA's petition and that we will fight to keep the right to regulate solar in our state. Readers can sign the petition at [savesolar.org](https://www.savesolar.org).

Carol Miller, Newark