

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

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 a 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 (usually under Opinions section)
- Check the word count guidelines (generally 150–250 words)

Structuring Your LTE

1. First sentence: Explain what it is you're writing about and why it's important.
2. **Next, tell a brief personal story involving the issue. A few facts/stats are good to include as support, but people remember authentic stories.**
3. Then explain why it matters to you, your family, business, or community.
4. Close with asking readers to take specific action

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 published in the paper.
- Ask people to take specific action
 - 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.
- 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.
- Note: many newspapers require personal info (name, address). This info will not be published.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.
- If you would like feedback on your LTE, email advocacy@solarunitedneighbors.org.

After Submitting:

- If you haven't seen your letter published, calling the paper and asking if the plan on publishing the letter can put it on their radar and often get it published!

SAMPLE LTE

Title: Big bully Duke punishing me for solar energy investment

To the Editor:

I proudly decided to add solar panels to my home two years ago. It was an investment that I am still paying off. Instead of paying \$150 or more to Duke each month, I would pay much less to Duke, and the rest to pay down my loan. My first month, my bill was only \$8! That did not last long. All of a sudden, I noticed my bills were at least \$35. Then it got even higher. My last bill was \$75! I found out that Duke is charging me a minimum amount every month. They are charging me for electricity I don't use. Now I'm in jeopardy of not paying my loan off in my lifetime because Duke is taking, (stealing!!!) my money!

Duke should not benefit from my investment while punishing me. It's unAmerican.

We need to encourage alternative energy not let big bully Duke run us over. While this harms solar owners, it is also unfair to people with energy-efficient homes, part-time residents, and residents trying to age in place. Minimum bills now apply to customers who receive electricity from Florida Power & Light and Duke Energy.

If you are on board with me on this, please email or Tweet or snail mail Governor DeSantis and ask him to advocate for these new fees to be reconsidered by the Public Service Commission.

Amy Jenkins

Village of Country Club Hills