



Tools for Advocates – Letters to the Editor

Writing a commentary or letter to the editor is an effective way to raise awareness among the general public, as well as legislators and public officials. Your letter can be a response to something in the news, make a point that was omitted in an article, or disagree with or correct misinformation from a news story, editorial, or another letter. Sending a letter to the editor raises the issue's profile in the news outlet and increases the chances that a letter on the topic will be published. If you are responding to a recent article or commentary published, aim to respond within two days for a daily paper if possible.

Step 1: Choose a media outlet

Choose one newspaper or online outlet to send your letter to first. If it does not get published, you can send it to another outlet. It is a good practice not to submit the same letter/commentary to more than one media outlet before knowing if it will be printed.

Review the submission guidelines (how to submit, length limits, etc.) specific to the outlet you'll be submitting to. See also "Submit to an outlet" for a partial list of Minnesota outlets.

Step 2: Consider format and outline

This sample format can help get you started.

- Start with a "hook" to draw in readers. (1 or a couple of sentences). Some options:
 - Refer to recent related media coverage
 - Tell a very short compelling story
 - Refer to local events or changes you've noticed
 - Use a compelling statistic, especially one that's local
- Explain why this issue is important to you or people you know (1 or a few sentences). This might include
 - Your role or current work position
 - An experience you've had or witnessed others having, and its impact.
 - A compelling statistic. (Local data can be found in MHP's County Profiles or Legislative District Profiles, the American Factfinder, or other places.)
- Suggest what can be done
 - Be sure to include the "ask" (e.g. the legislature should include \$x million for housing and homelessness services).

Note:

- The "hook" and "why this issue is important" may end up being one and the same, depending on word limit and what you want to say.
- Aim for shorter and more succinct yet powerful pieces.
- Include specific, concrete examples whenever possible.
- Sharing a story to make a heart connection, plus data to make a head connection can be a useful approach. But if you have expertise in one or the other of these areas, use what you know best to express your authority.

Sample format (commentaries)

Follow the same format as above for LTEs, but you'll have more space to develop ideas. You may want to expand middle section on why the issue is important.



Step 3: Write, with these tips in mind

Do:

- Focus on one important point or topic.
- Be brief.
- Be sure to follow the guidelines and word count limit of the target publication.
- Use verified facts and local data when possible.
- Create immediacy by indicating how readers will be affected by the issue you address.
- When possible; try to balance criticism with a positive — ask readers for action when practical. This includes elected officials.
- Point people to a source for more information or to engage in action whenever practical.
- When writing to your local newspaper (not recommended for larger city or national publication), follow up with a polite phone inquiry about its status if it doesn't appear within 4-5 days to ensure it was received and considered.
- If the publication publishes an online version, hyperlink the relevant websites or emails.

Avoid:

- Overstating or exaggerating points. One overstatement makes every following point suspect.
- Insulting your opponents.
- Using jargon or acronyms not understood by the general public.
- Using all capital letters or bold text to emphasize words, as this can cause people to dismiss what you are saying. You may italicize one or two words, but most papers will print in plain text regardless.
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Step 4: Submit to an outlet

A partial list of Minnesota newspapers is below with links or contact information for submission.

Pioneer Press

By email: letters@pioneerpress.com

By mail: Pioneer Press 345 Cedar Street St. Paul, MN 55101

By fax: (651) 228-5564.

Star Tribune

Submit online: <http://www.startribune.com/opinion/115289839.html>

By email: Opinion@startribune.com This e-mail address is being protected from spambots. You need JavaScript enabled to view it.

By mail: Star Tribune | 425 Portland Avenue South Minneapolis, MN 55488

Duluth News Tribune

Submit online: http://www.duluthnewstribune.com/event/contactForm/email_id/171/

By mail: Duluth News Tribune 424 W. First St. Duluth, MN 55802

Rochester Post-Bulletin

By email: letters@postbulletin.com

By mail: Editorial Page Post-Bulletin 18 First Ave. S.E. Rochester, MN 55903-6118



Eden Prairie News

Submit online: https://edenprairienews-dot-com.bloxcms-ny1.com/site/forms/online_services/letter/
By mail: Eden Prairie News 250 Prairie Center Drive, Suite 211 Eden Prairie, MN 55344

Sun Current

Submit online: <http://current.mnsun.com/submit-a-letter/>
By mail: Sun Current 10917 Valley View Road Eden Prairie, MN 55344

Press & News

Submit online: <http://pressnews.com/submit-a-letter-to-the-editor/>
By mail: Press & News 33 Second St. N.E., Box 280 Osseo, MN 55369

Savage Pacer

Submit online: https://savagepacer-dot-com.bloxcms-ny1.com/site/forms/online_services/letter/
By mail: Savage Pacer 14093 Commerce Avenue Savage, MN 55372

South Washington County Bulletin

Submit online: http://www.swcbulletin.com/event/contactForm/email_id/16/
By mail: South Washington County Bulletin 7584 80th Street South Cottage Grove, MN. 55016

Grand Rapids Herald-Review

Submit online: https://grandrapidsmn-dot-com.bloxcms.com/site/forms/online_services/letter
By mail: Grand Rapids Herald-Review 301 1st Ave. NW Grand Rapids, MN 55744

Sun Sailor

Submit online: <http://sailor.mnsun.com/submit-a-letter/>