



Tips for writing letters to the Editor

Writing letters to the editor of your local paper is a great way to energize other nurses, promote MARN's visibility in the community, and spread the word about important issues. Letters to the Editor (LTEs) can be used to correct and clarify facts in a previous news story, oppose or support the actions of an elected official or agency, direct attention to a problem, spur news editors to cover an issue that is being overlooked, or urge readers to support your cause. LTEs are especially effective in local, community papers. You can send letters by fax, e-mail, or through the mail.

Tips on Effective Letters to the Editor

- **Pick a timely topic**
Newspapers rarely publish letters on topics that are not already being covered in the news.
- **Research Guidelines**
Most paper's length limit on LTEs is around 250 words. Stick to this so that an editor does not cut out the important points of your letter. Some papers require a typed letter. Others may want it sent over e-mail. Often newspapers want your address and phone number so they can verify that you wrote the letter.
You can usually find a paper's guidelines on the letters page. If not, call the paper directly or visit its website.
- **Assume nothing**
Do not assume that your readers are informed on your topic. Give a concise but informative background before plunging into the main issue. Refer to any newspaper article or editorial to which you are responding by date and title. Also include any relevant credentials that prove you are informed about your topic.
- **Be brief**
State your position as succinctly as possible without eliminating necessary detail. Most paper's length limit on LTEs is around 250 words.
- **Find a local angle**
Readers are more interested in an issue when they see how it affects their lives and communities. Show how your issue will affect this particular readership.
- **Avoid form letters**
Do not send the same letter to two competing papers in the same circulation area, or many copies of an identical letter to a single paper.