

WRITING AN OP-ED OR LETTER TO THE EDITOR

How to make world-changing headlines in your community

Write an opinion editorial or submit a “Letter to the Editor” to get the attention of your community and your Congressman about important issues, that impact the world’s poor, and how we can help make a difference. Submissions to your local paper can be a great way to inform community members about an issue and your call to action. Newspapers will often run pieces written by grassroots activists, especially if the article is well-written, timely, and has a local angle. However, you should check with your newspaper before submitting your letter or editorial, as different papers often have different guidelines for editorial submissions from community members.

Here are a few tips for writing your letter or editorial:

- **Keep it short.** In general, op-eds should be 600-800 words, and letters to the editor should be 200-300 words.
- **Make it locally relevant.** The more you connect your editorial to a community event or development on the issue, the better. Newspapers publish information they believe is pertinent to their readers, so your piece is more likely to be published when it is tied to a current, local event or targets local leaders (for example, when it responds to the actions—or lack thereof—of your member of Congress).
- **Make it personal.** While your op-ed should include facts about the issue, it should also reflect your personality. The best editorials explain why the subject is relevant to both the writer and the reader. Tell your own story and why you care about the issue you are campaigning for.
- **Make it action-oriented.** Include information on how readers can get involved. If you’re writing an op-ed near the time that the lobbying visits are taking place, make sure your editorial includes information on how readers can join your efforts. Editors are unlikely to include a Web site or call to action in the body of your article. However, you should include a Web site in your biography at the end of your Op-ed. You can also encourage your readers to write their member of Congress.
- **Learn from other published pieces.** If you want to write something original, [here’s an example](#) to get your creative juices flowing: [click here](#). This op-ed from a World Vision advocate was published in the *Baltimore Sun* urging her Congressman to sponsor the Trafficking Victims Protection Act.

Don’t forget to include your contact information. Newspapers need to know how to reach you if they’re going to run your editorial.