WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

A letter to the editor is an effective, simple way to spread awareness about a public policy issue. As implied by the name, a letter to the editor (LTE) is a short letter sent to the editor of a publication about an issue of concern. Most LTEs are written in response to a published story. You can write letters to the editor of a local or national newspaper, online magazine, or blog.

Like op-eds, LTEs can be centered on a personal story or be more factual and straightforward. It’s important to think about the readership of the outlet you are sending your LTE to when determining what kind of writing style you should use. Also, keep in mind that your LTE can be in agreement with or opposition to the original piece you are responding to, or could add to the article by offering a different or missed point of view.

As you write your own letter, some key points to remember are:

- As a volunteer, you have an important story to tell. Lawmakers read their local newspapers and can be influenced by stories from their constituents that are shared in this way. The awareness you can bring to an issue by submitting an LTE is unique and valuable.
- Link your letter to a published story. You can respond to any article that you feel relates to your cause as a hook to get the editor’s attention. Your American Heart Association contact can help you identify a story to respond to for your letter.
- Keep it short. Your LTE should be short and concise, up to 250 words max. Most publications have limitations on how long LTEs can be, so your AHA contact will share any specific requirements for your letter. Generally, you’ll be asked to share a few sentences telling your story and then why you want to see the issue you’re discussing to be resolved. Your AHA contact can help you draft or edit your story to meet the publication’s requirements, so please share it with them before submission.
- Include your contact information. Often publications will call to verify your identity and confirm that you submitted an LTE, so be sure to include your name, email, and phone number when submitting your letter.
- Use a catchy title. Your title should offer a preview of what your letter is about in a way that attracts the attention of your audience. Your AHA contact can help you come up with this.
- Talk about the issue from your perspective. Your LTE should seek to answer these two questions: Why is this issue important to you? Why is it important to people in your community?

For additional support on submitting a letter to the editor on a topic, reach out to your AHA contact, who can provide talking points or data to support your opinion on a public policy issue.