Writing a Letter to the Editor (LTE)

Newspaper letters to the editor (LTEs) are an important way to inform the public, policymakers, and press about an issue and how the public views it and keep important issues in the spotlight. LTEs are an excellent media tactic for "rapid-response" situations and campaigns where we need to demonstrate public support or opposition, or where we wish to pressure a decision-maker. LTEs are especially effective for campaigns related to politics and legislation, because congressional staff closely monitor the opinion pages of newspapers in their districts.

Tips for Writing Your Letter:

- Know and stick to the word limit (often under 200 words). One word over, and your letter will be rejected.
- You must provide your name, address and phone number. These are not counted in the word limit and your address will not be printed
- Reference a recent event, local development, or news coverage.
- Speak from your perspective and experience. Write from your heart and try to avoid lecturing.
- You are allowed one letter per month from the date your letter appears in print
- Point out a novel or different (and still important) part of the story that is being missed.
- Submit the letter directly to the newspaper and follow up by phone or email if you don't get a response within a few days. Put the letter in the body of the email to make it easy for the editorial staff to read.
- Just write! As soon as you feel inspired to write, sit down and do it. Get your initial thoughts out; add data, correct and edit later. Make sure not to wait too long before submitting or the LTE will no longer be timely.
- Follow up with the newspaper a day or two after you submit to ask if they're planning to print your letter.

Writing an Opinion Piece (Op-Ed)

An op-ed appears in a newspaper's print edition and/or online, often opposite the editorial page, and always in the opinion section – which is a heavily read part of a newspaper! Like publishing LTEs, publishing an op-ed is a great way for you to inform the public, policymakers, and the press about your issues. In general, op-eds are longer than LTEs and should be saved for the strongest submissions.

Tips for Writing Your Op-Ed:

- Keep the topic relevant to people in your community. The topic should be related to a current news story or event.
- Use clear, strong language to convey your message. You may have a lot to get off your chest, but remember that your goal is to persuade readers. A focused narrative will help readers follow your thoughts.
- Be sure that all facts are correct and are attributed. Be deliberate when you choose your words.
- Be entertaining. Keeping in mind all of the above, there is still room to write in an entertaining and creative manner. Readers usually expect to get more out of an opinion piece than simple

facts or a list of talking points, so don't disappoint. Use humor, a story, or another unique method to illustrate your thoughts if appropriate.

Where to Send (Try sending it to multiple papers, even if they are outside your area. Just make sure you send it in separate emails.) :

- Helena Independent Record:
  - https://helenair.com/forms/contact/letter_to_the_editor/
  - 200 word limit
  - Call 406-447-4000

- Bozeman Chronicle (you have to be a subscriber to submit):
  - Email citydesk@dailychronicle.com
  - 300 word limit
  - Call 406-587-4491

- Great Falls Tribune:
  - Email letters@greatfallstribune.com
  - Call (406) 791-1460

- **Missoulian**:
  - Email oped@missoulian.com
  - 200 word limit
  - Call (406) 523-5215

- Billings Gazette:
  - https://billingsgazette.com/forms/contact/letter_to_the_editor/ or Email pbellinghausen@billingsgazette.com
  - 250 word limit
  - Call 406-657-1200

- **Ravalli Republic:**
  - https://ravallirepublic.com/forms/contact/letter_to_the_editor/#tracking-source=menu-nav
  - 250 word limit
  - Call 406-363-3300

- **Flathead Beacon**
  - (406) 257-9220
  - 300 word limit
  - Contact form: https://flatheadbeacon.com/connect/

- **Daily Inter Lake (Kalispell):**

    - https://form.jotform.com/63216449575160
    - 300 word limit
    - Call (406) 755-7000

- Montana Standard (Butte):
    - https://mtstandard.com/forms/contact/letter_to_the_editor/#tracking-source=menu-nav
    - 350 word limit
    - Call 406-496-5500

- Livingston Enterprise:
    - Email enterprise@livent.net or https://www.livingstonenterprise.com/content/letters-editor-0

- Other local papers in your area!

SAMPLE LTEs that were published:

By Phil Knight:

SB 557 could undermine democracy

Apr 11, 2023 3

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Please ask your representative to oppose Senate Bill 557. This is a terrible bill that could undermine democracy in Montana.

SB 557 requires nonprofits who sue the government to disclose their donors. This is an assault on privacy and would discourage charitable donations.

SB 557 requires people who sue to pay for all costs, creating a serious financial barrier against holding government agencies accountable.

SB 557 requires people who sue to seek an injunction, prove that they will win in court, and pay an expensive bond before they can use the courts to defend their rights. This absurd bill requires people who sue to prove that they will win their case before they argue it in court.

SB 557 requires plaintiffs to pay industry and the state's attorneys and expert fees in the event of a loss, even on a technicality, creating a major disincentive for citizens challenging government agencies.

By Isabel Shaida

BOZEMAN DAILY CHRONICLE NEWS OPINIONS SPORTS BUSINESS OUTDOORS EVENTS POLICE REPORTS OBITUARIES MAGAZINES

Letters | Editorials | Guest Columns | Submit a letter | Polls

LETTERS TO EDITOR

Letter to the editor: Leaders should work to ensure safe, livable climate

Isabel Shaida Sep 23, 2021

Last week, I had the opportunity, with a group of other Montanans, to meet with Sen. Jon Tester. In introducing myself, I told the senator that — given the state of ecological devastation (and economic instability) — I choose not to have children. I have always wanted to have children.

The first thing the senator said was that “The climate crisis is the single biggest threat we face.” He continued, “we must end our reliance on fossil fuels.” Of course, I agree.

Sen. Tester was less clear about whether he would deliver on the critical $3.5 trillion climate-centered infrastructure package that is now before Congress. This package mandates a Civilian Climate Corps, the end of fossil fuel subsidies, and a real investment in the 100% green economy we need.

I grapple with whether to have children because I do not feel confident that they will be guaranteed their inalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Every person must have fresh air to breathe, clean water to drink, and safe and healthy communities to live in.

Government is how we care for one another. Fundamental to care is a safe, livable climate. We have the technology, we have the resources, we have the people to begin this work now.