



GUIDE: WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

OBJECTIVE: We have the goal of submitting letters to papers in all 50 states during the two weeks of COP26 (October 31 - November 12, 2021). Please [complete this](#) **LTE tracker** form so we can see how many letters were submitted!

TOOLKIT INDEX

What Is Build Back Fossil Free?	1
What Is a Letter To the Editor and why Now?	2
Letter to the Editor Checklist	2
How to Write an LTE?	2
Talking Points	3
Sample Letter to the Editor	4

WHAT IS BUILD BACK FOSSIL FREE?

Biden's campaign message was "Build Back Better." But Biden can't do that unless he Builds Back Fossil Free. BBFF is a campaign to push President Biden to take [executive actions](#) that will:

- Protect and invest in the Black, Indigenous, People of Color and working-class communities that have borne the brunt of fossil fuel pollution and climate disaster.
- Reject new fossil projects, eliminate giveaways to oil, gas, and coal corporations, and end the era of fossil fuel production.
- Launch a national climate mobilization to Build Back Fossil Free, delivering jobs, justice, and opportunity for all.

Specifically, we are demanding that President Biden stop approving fossil fuel projects and declare a climate emergency right now, during the United Nations climate summit in Glasgow, Scotland. We cannot end the climate crisis without ending the fossil fuel era. There's no safe way to extract, transport or refine fossil fuels without harm to people or without fueling the climate emergency.

For decades, Indigenous communities, farmers, landowners and climate activists have had to play whack-a-mole against the latest dangerous fossil fuel project. Pipelines like Line 3 and Dakota Access violate treaty rights. Petrochemical facilities like the proposed Formosa plastics plant would double down on environmental racism in Louisiana's infamous "Cancer Alley."

Here's the good news: Biden can stop all these projects and direct his administration to say no more fossil fuels, period. Read more about our demands for President Biden [here](#).

WHAT IS A LETTER TO THE EDITOR AND WHY NOW?

A “Letter to the Editor” (LTE) is a written response to an article in a newspaper. It is a short opportunity (150-250 words) to provide an additional viewpoint on the original article. Letters must be directed to one newspaper that published the story and should be written within a few days of the publication date. Letters submitted by local residents are most likely to be published. While news articles may not have the exact details or perspective that we would like to see, an LTE is a way to elevate our specific message or demands and get them published in a newspaper.

Between October 31 and November 12, we have a major opportunity to highlight our demands while President Biden and his administration attend the annual UN climate negotiations, known as COP26. The media will be focused on climate and Biden’s actions, so there will be lots of chances to get letters published in newspapers around the country.

We want to send the message that regardless of the outcome of COP26, Biden has existing authority to stop fossil fuel projects and declare a climate emergency now, without action from Congress or anyone else. Meeting our demands is not only critical to meet the scale of the crisis, but also necessary if the US wants to be considered an international leader on the issue .

LETTER TO THE EDITOR CHECKLIST

- ☐ Familiarize yourself with the talking points below.
- ☐ Pick a story in your local newspaper to respond to. It could be about Biden’s climate policies, climate impacts broadly, or the COP26 negotiations specifically.
- ☐ Draft and proofread your letter.
- ☐ Submit your letter to your local paper.
- ☐ [Complete this](#) LTE tracker form so we can track our progress!
- ☐ Once your letter has been published, forward it to Laurel (llevin@fwwatch.org) so that we can amplify it in our networks!

HOW TO WRITE AN LTE

Quick Tips for Writing a Successful Letter to the Editor

1. **Follow the Submission Guidelines and Keep it Simple**—Your odds of publication are best if your letter is short and direct. Most LTEs are around two or three short, simple paragraphs. Guidelines are usually posted online under the newspaper’s opinion section. For outlets in your regions - including their submission guidelines - [click here](#).
2. **Focus on One Key Point**—Don’t deviate too much or you might lose your audience.
3. **Your Letter Should Stand on its Own**—if you’re responding to another letter or article, don’t assume

readers have read them. Provide necessary background information as briefly as possible (i.e. “In the August 22nd article entitled *Water Privatization Increases*, the author stated that...”).

4. **Carefully Support Your Opinions with Evidence**—Numbers, statistics, and cited facts will make your argument more persuasive. Just be careful not to overuse them, as they can get confusing. Reference the COP26: Fossil Free talking points (below)
5. **Don’t Use Jargon**—Using technical terms or acronyms (i.e. UNFCCC, CCS, decarbonization) can confuse readers.
6. **Include a Strong Closing**—Leave readers with a clear understanding of your message by reiterating your main point at the end of the letter.
7. **Edit and Proofread Before Submitting**—Give your letter a careful read for any spelling or grammar mistakes before you finalize and submit it.
8. **Include Your Contact Information**—Put your name, affiliation, and location at the bottom of your letter. Some papers also ask for address and contact information.

TALKING POINTS

- Biden promised to be the climate president and wants to establish the U.S. as an international leader. But he’s going to the UN climate negotiations mostly empty handed because he’s been negotiating with fossil fuel supporters in Congress.
- The most important thing he can do to show U.S. leadership is to actually keep fossil fuels in the ground and respect treaty rights of Indigenous nations.
- He can use his existing executive authority to stop fossil fuel projects, just like he did with Keystone XL. From drilling on public lands, to pipelines, refineries, petrochemicals, and exports, he can direct his agencies to reject permits for fossil fuel projects today with a stroke of a pen.
- The Department of Interior is planning a massive lease sale for new offshore drilling in the Gulf of Mexico, opening up over 80 million acres of public waters. This lease sale is a continuation of Trump administration policies, and President Biden should immediately stop this sale using his existing authority.
- Climate destruction is only possible in a world in which racism is tolerated. It’s time for Joe Biden to keep his promises to be the climate president. By taking executive action, he can prevent climate chaos, end fossil fuel racism / fossil fuel colonialism, and improve well-being for millions of people.
- Action starts at home, Biden can’t talk a big game at COP26 while continuing to support building fossil fuel projects in Indigenous, Black, and low-wealth communities.

- Taking action to mitigate climate change isn't hypothetical. Biden has permits on his desk right now for fracking, pipelines, and export terminals.
- Fossil fuel executives have poisoned our environment, our bodies, and our democracy for long enough. Joe Biden must be willing to look oil and gas CEOs in the eye and tell them their time is up before he makes any promises at the UN.
- We deserve a world beyond fossil fuels: a world in which workers' rights, community health, Indigenous rights, and our shared climate come before corporate profits. Right now, we have an unprecedented chance to lay the groundwork; regardless of COP or Congress!
- Joe Biden, walk your talk while you're at COP!

tone: *Visionary ~ Hopeful ~ Uncompromising ~ Confrontational*

SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Here's an example of an effective Food & Water Watch LTE that was published in a Pennsylvania newspaper in response to a story on the Governor's climate plans.

Gov. Tom Wolf's new climate "action plan" is big on long-term goals, but woefully short on the kinds of immediate action that international scientific bodies and climate researchers say we must be taking right now.

The administration's targets for reducing climate pollution mean nothing if they continue to allow fossil fuel companies to build new power plants and pipelines, and give the fracking industry free rein to drill new wells. We cannot achieve meaningful progress by continuing to sacrifice the health and safety of front-line communities, or betting on expensive, unproven schemes like carbon capture or factory farm biogas.

If Gov. Wolf really means what he says about the climate crisis, he must confront the fossil fuel industry head on now, and not wait for the next governor to do the right thing.

*Megan McDonough
Food & Water Watch
Pennsylvania State Director
Elizabeth, PA*

REMINDERS

After you've submitted your LTE, remember to share an update with us so we can track our progress.

- ❑ **DON'T FORGET** to [complete this](#) LTE tracker form so we can see how many letters were submitted.
- ❑ If your letter is published, forward it to Laurel (llevin@fwwatch.org) so that we can share it.