



## **Oregon Solar Ambassadors** **Tips for Letters to the Editor & Talking Points**

For assistance with your letter to the editor or if you are interested in participating in a media interview, contact us at [advocacy@solarunitedneighbors.org](mailto:advocacy@solarunitedneighbors.org).

One of the most influential parts of newspapers is the “letters to the editor” (LTE) section on topics of the day. Research shows that a well-written, authentic LTE by ordinary citizens can help to persuade editors, readers, and decision makers--who carefully monitor the content of LTE to gauge public opinion.. Writing an LTE is a meaningful and easy way to advocate for public policies. They can be a challenge to write because of space constraints. That’s why we’ve provided tips to help you write and submit your letter to the editor.

### **Why write a LTE?**

- LTEs tell decision-makers at newspapers what issues their readers care about. This encourages them to focus more attention on those issues.
- Elected officials and their staff pay close attention to the LTE section. This is particularly true when their names are mentioned.
- The volume of letters matter; more letters means that more LTE on this topic will be published.
- LTEs educate the public on our issues

### **Getting Started**

- Find the LTE submission instructions on your local newspaper’s website (usually under Opinions section - [example here](#)). If you need help finding this or submitting your final letter, contact [advocacy@solarunitedneighbors.org](mailto:advocacy@solarunitedneighbors.org).
- Check the word count guidelines (generally 150-250 words)

### **Structuring Your LTE**

1. First sentence: Explain what it is you’re writing about and why it’s important.
2. **Next, tell a brief personal story involving the issue. A few facts/stats are good to include as support, but people remember authentic stories.**
3. Then explain why it matters to you, your family, business, or community.
4. Close with asking readers to take specific action

## General Tips

- Assume your audience knows little or nothing about this issue.
- Keep your message to no more than three important points.
- Your letter is more likely to be printed if you can link it to a recent article published in the paper.
- Ask people to take specific action. Example: contact the decision maker, sign a petition, vote, testify, & etc.
- Tell your personal story and explain why the issue is important to your community.
- Consider submitting to smaller local papers, not just the nearest big city paper. Smaller circulation papers are often in need of editorial content.
- Letters should be creative, written with passion and, if possible, personal.
- Note: many newspapers require personal info (name, address). This info will not be published. They will most likely contact you to ensure that the letter was written by you and to notify you that it will be published soon.
- If you would like feedback or assistance with submitting your LTE, email [advocacy@solarunitedneighbors.org](mailto:advocacy@solarunitedneighbors.org).

## After Submitting:

- If you haven't seen your letter published, calling the paper and asking if the plan on publishing the letter can put it on their radar and often get it published!



## The Palm Beach Post

### FPL's spin on solar panels misleading

January 8, 2022

After reading the response about rooftop panels and net metering offered by an [EPL](#) spokesperson, all I could think about is what a fantastic spin they put on their side.

The statement as presented does not align with reality. As I research solar for my own home, I noted that it is common that despite the high cost, there are programs that finance the project for 20 years. These same programs have no out of pocket expenses. It is also considered part of the home and can transfer upon sale. The purchase does not impact your credit. Personally, I have held off making the purchase. I find the most economical way to invest in solar is to self finance the project.

I would also note that without net metering, the solar advantage is wiped away and will damage an industry that may be capable of offering ecological gains for society. The elimination of net metering merely enhances the current monopolies of power companies. A true capitalist approach is to have this competition to allow for market choices. Perhaps the Post should invest resources in an in-depth story and publish the facts for all. For the record, I am an FPL customer that still does not have solar.

*Glen Wilner, Palm City*

## Sample LTE

### **The Oregonian**

**Word Count:** 250 words Max

\*Below is 222 words, leaves room for 1-2 sentences for a personal example\*

To: [letters@oregonian.com](mailto:letters@oregonian.com)

Subject: Oregonians Need to Stand Up to Greedy Utility Companies

I am writing to shed light on an issue affecting Oregon's solar users: the proposed changes to net metering policies by our utility companies - Idaho Power and Portland General Electric. As a concerned citizen and advocate for renewable energy, we need to raise awareness about the impacts of these proposals, and mobilize support to protect the future of solar in our state.

Net metering is a vital way for customers to generate their own electricity and reduce their dependence on the grid. By allowing solar users to receive credit for the excess energy they produce, net metering not only promotes energy independence but also stimulates economic growth by creating jobs and encouraging private investment in the renewable energy sector.

But, the recent proposals put forth by the utilities undermine these benefits and make solar power less accessible for working families. Utilities' plans to change net metering effectively discourage the adoption of solar energy systems.

It's evident that these proposed changes are motivated by money. We must oppose these measures and advocate for policies that support the growth of solar energy and ensure equitable access for all Oregonians.

I ask all citizens to join me in expressing concerns to the PUC and our legislators, we need to send a strong message to utility companies that their proposed changes are unacceptable. Together, we can make a difference!

[Your Name]

[City of Residence]

## Suggested Talking Points for Net Metering

- Share your personal solar story. If you have solar and it has impacted your life, share how. If you don't have solar yet, tell how a fair net metering policy would help you and others access solar.
- Net metering ensures rooftop solar owners receive a fair credit for the extra energy they produce and share with their neighbors. This helps families lower their electricity bills with local clean energy.
- Idaho Power's plan would drastically reduce the solar credit from an average of 8.8¢ to 5.96¢/kWh. This would slash by 34% solar users' average annual electric bill savings.
- Portland General Electric's draft proposal would put solar out of reach for working families. Current solar credit rates would only be available to those who can afford to add battery storage to their solar system. Those who can't afford storage would unfairly have their solar rates cut 20–70%. Plus, current solar customers could only keep their existing rates for ten years before moving to the lower rates.
- These proposals are a slippery slope for Oregon's solar homeowners and will hurt future adoption of rooftop solar in the state. In states where net metering policies have been altered, there have been drastic reductions in rooftop solar adoption.
  - According to [CALSSA](#), due to the recent changes to net metering in California, more than 17,000 solar jobs could be lost in 2023, representing 22% of all solar jobs in the industry.
- In Oregon, now is the wrong time to revise net metering. Already, most of those who adopt solar in Oregon are middle income or lower, and we are in the process of implementing funds from the Inflation Reduction Act enabling even more middle and low income Oregonians to adopt solar and storage.
- It's not clear that Oregon's utilities are on track to meet our climate goals, and it's incredibly costly and very long wait times to build new electric transmission, so we should not be rolling back net metering.