

Letters-to-the-Editors

Letters-to-the-editors are great because we can get our word out to thousands of people at a time and get extra mileage out of media coverage – all for free!

Tips for Writing Letters-to-the-Editor:

- Submit your letter in a timely manner about a timely topic. Don't let too much time slip by – news gets old fast.
- If possible, link your letter to something published recently in the paper (either a news item or another letter-to-the-editor) and respond as quickly as you can.
- Keep it focused on one main point, concise and informative. Editorial space is limited. A shorter letter has a better chance of getting printed. Word limit is about 200 words per letter but check the paper for guidelines.
- Find out the publication's guidelines (length, letters/writer, signers/letter) and stick to them.
- Be firm but polite: make your case without insults or rants. Don't engage in personal attacks on reporters or other letter-writers.
- Write with the assumption that readers know nothing about your topic. Don't use acronyms or "industry lingo" that only a few will understand.
- Use talking points that may be provided to you but don't rely too much on them – always personalize.
- Always proof read your letter before sending it.
- Recruit your friends and colleagues to send in letters as well--the more letters submitted on a topic, the better the chance of one of you getting published.
- If you hold a position include that with your signature (ex. Affiliate President) to add credibility. It increases the chance that you'll get published.

Submitting your letter

Always include your full name, address and phone number. This information will not be published but many publications will contact you to verify your identity before printing a letter. Also be sure to sign your letter unless submitted over e-mail.

Richmond Times-Dispatch: letters@timesdispatch.com

Freelance Star (Fredericksburg): letters@freelancestar.com

Washington Post: letters@washpost.com

Virginian Pilot: letters@pilotonline.com

Daily Progress (Charlottesville): letters@dailyprogress.com

Daily Press: online form available at www.dailypress.com in the Opinions section

Roanoke Times: Karen.trout@roanoke.com

News and Advance (Lynchburg): Online form available at www.newsadvance.com in the Opinion section.

Daily News Record (Harrisonburg): Online form available at www.dnronline.com in the Opinion section.

Did you get a letter published? Be sure to let others know: send it to your list servs, to NAMI VA, and consider sending it to your state representatives.

Questions? Need Talking Points? Contact msigner@nami.org