



WRITING LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters to the editor are a powerful way to reach your community and let them know about important issues that need to be addressed. For many elected officials, it is one of the first pages they turn to and a recent survey by the Center for Practical Politics found that they are “one of the most influential channels by which an active citizen can express ideas.”

The following are guidelines and tips for writing letters to the editor in your community. For a list of newspapers in your community, go to www.cleanairkc.com and click on your city.

EPPIC-a helpful tool for developing content for letters to the editor

Engage: Grab the reader’s attention with a startling fact, a descriptive image, or a strong statement about a serious problem.

Propose: State what needs to be done to solve the problem or issue.

Personalize: If applicable, write about how the problem or issue has affected you personally.

Illustrate: Describe why taking the action mentioned in the above sections is important and the benefits for community of doing so.

Call to Action: Call on elected officials and other citizens to move forward or take a specific action.

Tips for writing a letter to the editor

- Letter should be short and concise, no more than 250 words
- Make sure to include your name, address, and daytime phone number. Most newspapers will contact you to verify that you are the author of the letter.
- If possible, cite a recent article, editorial, or column in you letter. It increases the chance of being printed.
- If you cite an article, editorial, or column, make sure to mention the title and date and give a very brief statement what it was concerning.
- Stay away from copying sample letters, your own words are more effective.

- Mention city officials or legislators by name, they are more likely to see your letter.
- If you write to criticize someone or something, begin with a word of appreciation, agreement, or praise. Don't be merely critical; be respectful and polite.
- Don't be afraid to appeal to morals, ethics, or a sense of justice in addition to the logical and/or scientific support for your issue.
- Humor can be an effective way to bring attention to a subject in a way many readers will remember.
- If you have credentials that are applicable to the subject matter, mention them.
- Only one exclamation point per letter!
- A well written and grammatically correct letter is more likely to be printed. Have someone proof-read your letter.
- Follow-up. If your letter is not printed, contact the editor and ask if they received your letter and if they intend to print it. Some newspapers receive many letters and yours could have been misplaced.