

TIPSHEET

Letters to the Editor

Letters to the editor are a way for members of the public to share their perspective on the issues of the day. Individuals write letters to the editor when they want to respond to a specific news article, editorial, or a newspaper's overall coverage of an issue with their own opinion or to point out something that was missing from a particular story. Letters don't always have to be in response to an article or an editorial – they can also be a topic that is current and relevant to a paper's readership. From editors to readers to elected officials, the comments section allows all to gauge the current sentiment around an issue.

Let's say you want to advocate for a piece of legislation that will come up for a vote by the State Senate in the coming week. Submitting a letter to the editor of your local newspaper (or a national news outlet if you are focused on a bill going through Congress) is a valuable complement to other tactics you might employ like calling your legislator, helping to bring public attention and understanding of your perspective. If you call out your Representative or Senator, you will certainly get their attention as their legislative aides comb the local papers for issues of concern to their constituents, especially when those pieces mention their boss!

LETTER STRUCTURE

Below is a template letter to the editor on an imaginary piece of legislation called the Coastal Jobs Initiative. Always check your target news outlet's word count restrictions and any other guidelines they post online before you begin writing. As well, read the letters to the editor section of your local newspaper to get a sense of what types of letters are getting printed.

Dear Editor,

PARAGRAPH 1: *In your own words describe your connection to the coast, why you value healthy lands and waters.*

PARAGRAPH 2: *In your own words describe why the Coastal Jobs Initiative (CJI) will help protect and improve coastal habitats while providing jobs. Here's a sample paragraph:*

The Coastal Jobs Initiative brings critical state dollars to the coast for restoration projects, restoring clean water while bringing family wage jobs to idled workers. Through this restoration and jobs initiative, communities up and down the coast get a powerful return on investment: good rural jobs, stronger coastal communities, clean water, and sustainable fisheries.

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PARAGRAPH 3: This year, the Coastal Jobs Initiative would fund projects like [LOCAL PROPOSED PROJECT HERE], which would [JOBS BENEFIT] and [CLEAN WATER BENEFIT]. I am supporting it because [INSERT PERSONAL REASON/STORY HERE].

PARAGRAPH 4: As a [FISHERMAN/BUSINESS OWNER/OTHER], I encourage Senator Smith (or Representative X) to support and champion this innovative and important program to help our community.

Sincerely,
[Your name, address, email or phone]