



# Writing & Publishing Letters to the Editor

## Why Write a Letter to the Editor?

- The Editorial section of the newspaper is the most read section of the newspaper – an LTE is a great way to reach a broad number of people in a short time.
- Elected officials carefully monitor newspapers to gauge local opinion and can influence how they vote on issues you care about.
- To promptly address misleading or inaccurate information in a news article. Respond to criticism, correct an inaccuracy, complain about the slant of coverage, point out a missing fact in a story, or amplify an element of the story in an interesting way.
- Legislators are creatures with egos, and they want to be loved by everyone. Two lines of criticism (or praise) might seem meaningless in a broad effort to sway opinion, but if you mention the name of a member of Congress in a letter to the editor that is published, it will be read by the person you most want to influence.

## Tips for Writing Letters to the Editors that Will Get Published

**FIRST**, editors are more likely to run your letter if it references a story that ran in the paper during the last week or a particular columnist. In fact, it's almost impossible to get a letter to the editor published that does not reference a story. If possible, include it in the first sentence of the letter. Also, be sure to follow all of the rules for submitting a letter.

**SECOND**, keep the letters short – 100 to 200 words (two to four paragraphs). Editors are much more attracted to stories from someone who has a personal story or uses a unique angle to talk about an issue rather than just facts. Also, anyone who is representative of a group warrants attention.

**THIRD**, a reference to the legislator is a must. If the lawmaker has ignored you or your issue, letters to the editor are a great way to his/her attention. By contrast, if the lawmaker has supported your issue, *definitely* write a letter to the editor. It's also very wise to send a copy of the legislator's office (directed to his chief of staff). Even if the letter isn't published, you will be sending a potent message that you have the power (and inclination) to influence thousands of voters.

**FINALLY**, if appropriate (and if space allows), tell allies how they can get involved by including organization's names or web addresses.

Remember, the smaller the circulation the easier to have a letter published – and community papers are a great way to build support for a particular issue.

*This letter to the editor from AILA's New England Chapter was published in the New York Times in September, 2010.*

### **Revising Our Immigration Rules for Foreign Workers**

To the Editor:

Re "[Foreign Stimulus](#)" (Op-Ed, Sept. 14):

Pia Orrenius and Madeline Zavodny are completely on the money with their call for a greater emphasis on work-based immigration to enhance our competitiveness in the world economy. It should be the national policy of the United States to forthrightly and unapologetically attract the best minds from all over the world and turn them into assets of the United States.

How we do it – through the proposed auction system, a reform of the existing skills-based system or some other method – is less important than that we do it.

Matthew J. Maiona  
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Boston, Sept. 15, 2010