

SIX TIPS FOR WRITING EFFECTIVE OP-EDS AND LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



PEOPLE. POWER. PURPOSE.

Advocacy can lead to transformative improvements in our food and farm system, but it takes all of us being a voice for change to make that happen.

One effective way to educate the public and influence elected officials is writing to your local newspaper. We especially need more underrepresented women and BIPOC farmers telling their stories and shaping public debate!

An op-ed is short for “opposite the editorial page” and is an opinion piece written by a member of the public published in a newspaper. A letter to the editor is similar, but typically shorter and in response to a previously published article.

1

KEEP IT SIMPLE

- Be succinct. Most letters are about 200 words, and most op-eds are about 600-800 words. Confirm your paper’s length requirements prior to submission.
- Focus on only one specific food or farm policy or issue.
- Do not repeat your opponent’s arguments; restating a contrary position only serves to reinforce it.
- Avoid jargon which can confuse or bore your audience. Statistics, in moderation, can help advance your argument.

2

KEEP IT STRUCTURED

- Your introduction should set the scene and grab your audience’s attention, so they keep reading.
- The body should make your argument. It should be based on evidence, such as statistics, news, reports, or first-hand experience. Be bold, but indisputable.
- Your conclusion should provide specific policy recommendations to help solve the problem you described. Explain why now is the time to act.

3

MAKE IT LOCAL AND PERSONAL

- Newspapers care about what affects local people who buy their newspapers. Keep your audience in mind.
- Do not copy talking points or materials verbatim. It is more compelling to use your own voice and story.
- Describe how your issue will have a local impact or how it will affect you or your family. Tell an anecdote, if it illustrates your point.

4

MAKE IT TIMELY

- The chance of your letter being printed is greater if it is tied to a current event, anniversary, or recently published article. Mention it in the letter.
- Perfect is the enemy of the good; if you’re responding to a recent or upcoming event, submit as early as possible before the moment is gone.

5

SUBMIT IT CORRECTLY

- Papers will not print submissions that do not include a full name, address, phone number, and email.
- Include a one sentence description of your expertise as the author with your op-ed.
- If you are submitting by email, do not include attachments. Paste text within the body of the email.

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6

FOLLOW UP IS KEY

- Call the newspaper the next day. Ask if they received your letter and encourage them to print it.
- Submit your op-ed to only one paper at a time. Many papers will not consider your piece if it has been printed elsewhere.
- If you don't get a response, you can send a polite email telling the editor if you don't hear from him/her by a certain time, you will assume they have passed and you'll be submitting your op-ed elsewhere.
- Let us know when you submit a letter! Email policy@oeffa.org.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR OHIO'S MAJOR NEWSPAPERS

This information is subject to change. Confirm details with the newspaper's editorial page prior to submission. OEFFA staff are also happy to answer questions or help you write your letter or op-ed!

AKRON BEACON JOURNAL

- **Letters and Op-Eds:** Submit online at akron.com/submit-letter-to-the-editor or by email to vop@thebeaconjournal.com. Letters should be 500 words or less.

CINCINNATI ENQUIRER

- **Letters and Op-Eds:** Submit online at static.cincinnati.com/letter or by email to letters@enquirer.com. Letters should be limited to 100 words.

CLEVELAND PLAIN DEALER

- **Letters:** Submit online at shorturl.at/mxVX1. Letters should be 200 words or less.
- **Op-eds:** Email submissions to forum@cleveland.com. Preferred length is 700 words.

COLUMBUS DISPATCH

- **Letters:** Submit online at shorturl.at/RSVX5. Letters should be 200 words or less.
- **Op-eds:** Submit online at shorturl.at/hqKTZ. Op-eds should be 600 words or less.

DAYTON DAILY NEWS

- **Letters and Op-eds:** Submit by email to edletter@coxinc.com. Letters should be 250 words or less. Op-eds should be 800 words or less.

TOLEDO BLADE

- **Letters:** Submit online at toledoblade.com/letterstoeditor or by email to letters@theblade.com.
- **Op-eds:** Submit by email to kburris@theblade.com.