

Letters to the Editor 101

Why write a Letter to the Editor (LTE)?

They are a quick, easy and highly effective way to take a stand. Unlike most volunteering, you can write letters on your own time, when you want to take a stand. The letters page is a great place where both the public and legislators have the opportunity to hear a range of voices. It is an efficient and effective way to advocate reproductive and sexual health rights.

The great thing about LTE is that they don't need to be perfect – the most important aspect is your voice and getting it heard. The best way to learn how and when to write letters is by flipping to the letters page in your local paper and reading ones others have submitted. If you ever need help with your letter, you are more than welcome to contact PPABC.

Writing a LTE...

- Include your full names, address and phone number with every letter (they will not print your personal info, but will not publish your letter without it)
- Stick to the word limit! Try to keep your letters short and to the point; concise and articulate letters are more likely to be published and READ (the most important thing to remember!) than longer ones. Keep paragraphs to about two-to-three sentences long. (250 words or under should be perfect)
- Assume that people know nothing about the topic you are writing about.
- Be specific and focused – give the readers something to “hold on to” and take away with them. Supporting details will make a brief letter really powerful.
- If you are responding to an article, be timely about it! Be sure to cite the headline, author and the date it was published. It can be helpful to summarize the argument the author put forth, just in case your reader missed it
- Don't get personal! Do not attack another person's point of view.
- Powerful letters are ones that are personal and locally relevant. A personal tone can make your letter stand out.
- Using facts, research and expert testimony can be very effective backing you up and strengthening your argument. But don't overdo it – use facts as back-up.
- End with a thought-provoking question or call to action. Leave readers with something to think about or do about this issue.

Sample Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

Across our country, college women are facing a healthcare crisis. Birth control prices have skyrocketed at college health centers – pill packs have gone from \$5 or \$10 a month to \$40 or \$50. In many cases, the increase in cost means women can't afford birth control.

Under the deficit Reduction Act (DRA), pharmaceutical companies can no longer offer low-cost drugs to university health centers. This is an easy problem to correct; it will cost the government nothing and can be done immediately.

We need our legislators to help fix this birth control crisis. College women should not be penalized for a legislative error. If Congress is serious about reducing the rate of unintended pregnancies and abortion, they will swiftly fix this serious problem.

Sincerely,
Name
City, PA

Now, try writing a same LTE about one of the issues discussed...

Dear Editor,