Letters to the Editor

The Letters to the Editor section of your local newspaper presents an ideal forum for getting your message to its readers, be they local citizens or members of your congressional delegation. More people read the letters to the editor section than almost any other part of the paper (except the comics, of course!). It’s one of the first pages many elected officials turn to.

Here are a few guidelines for getting your letter to the editor printed:

- Keep the length to about 250 words or less.
- Writing on behalf of your Chapter will give your letter more weight. Writing as an concerned citizen will create the impression of citizen support or opposition to an issue. Think about what your objective is when writing a letter to the editor.
- Avoid rambling sentences and big words.
- Most papers accept letters submitted as emails now. Check your paper’s online site for where to send it or give them a call. If you type the letter—double spaced, one page maximum.
- Limit the number of points you make, and stay on the same subject.
- Be as factual as possible without being dull.
- Localize your letter—explain how the issue will affect your area.
- Accentuate the positive. When you criticize, also propose a solution to the problem, or a better alternative, if possible.

Your letter stands the best chance of getting printed when it responds to something recently printed in that newspaper, such as a news story, column, editorial, advertisement, or another letter. You can use the reference to that item as a springboard for stating your case.

Your letter can support and expand on something already in the news, make a point that was omitted, or disagree with and correct misinformation in whatever form it appeared.

And don’t be afraid to ask for action—tell readers what you want them to do. This includes your elected representatives. You can be sure they read the letters to the editor. By putting their names in the letter and asking for action—a vote, cosponsorship of a bill, an explanation, their position on an issue—you get their attention fast.

Modify the sample letter to the editor on the back of this toolsheet with local examples and your own style. You’ll see your issue and your opinion in print in no time!
Sample Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor:

America’s treasured landscapes need our help to make a comeback. Efforts have been underway for some time to restore national treasures like the Florida Everglades and the Great Lakes, which suffer from pollution, population pressures, toxic waste, water diversions, and wetlands destruction. A similar story can be told for the Mississippi River Delta.

Let’s put America to work on restoring the delta wetlands in Louisiana. Louisiana is losing land at an alarming rate – the equivalent of a football field every hour, or about 19 square miles every year and 1,900 square miles since the 1930s. Louisiana’s coast is a working landscape, one that offers protection from storms, acts as nurseries for important fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico, and provides homes and migratory habitat for millions of birds, including birds that spend the summer right here in our state.

We have the knowledge to undo much of the destruction taking place in the marshes, cypress forests and other one-of-a-kind habitats along the coast. Now we need the will and funding to make it so. Congress must act to restore this incredible area. The benefits will help protect the land and its people from destructive hurricanes, support economic activity throughout America, and provide important habitat for birds and wildlife, creating jobs in the process.

YOUR NAME
ADDRESS

If your letter is printed, please send us a copy or email us the link to the online version in your paper.

Please send it to audubonaction@audubon.org or Audubon
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