**Template – Letter to the Editor**

(Updated August 14, 2023)

*Letters to the editor (LTE) are one of the most widely read sections of the paper. Not only do members of Congress and their staff closely monitor the LTEs, but so do the general public, newspaper editors and reporters, and other opinion leaders. An LTE that speaks to a broader audience, and underscores AmeriCorps’ vital importance to the local community, is a great way to get your legislator’s attention and garner more public support.*

***Tips for writing and submitting an LTE to a local or regional newspaper:***

* *LTEs should respond to a specific article that recently ran in the paper, so it is important to closely monitor for any local news regarding the congressional budget cuts and any programs that would be affected and community service more generally.*
* *Consider submitting to a smaller local paper, not just the nearest big city paper. You’ll have a better chance of getting published.*
* *Focus on one topic - AmeriCorps funding. If you have a second issue, write a second letter.*
* *Papers have a word limit and you must stick to it. Look up the word limit for your intended publication (google the name of the publication and “letter to the editor submission”) prior to drafting. Be clear and concise – you probably only have about 150 words to make your point.*
* *You can find the email address for submitting your LTE on the newspaper’s website. Paste your letter into the body of your email – do NOT include it as an attachment.*
* *Many newspapers require that letter writers submit contact information with their letter. Phone numbers won’t be published. This is just to verify your identity.*
* *Voices for National Service is available to help edit your LTE and offer advice on placement. Contact Shanelle Oliver at* *soliver2@cityyear.org* *for assistance.*

***LTE template for you to customize with your story or insights:***

Sample Headline: Congress’ AmeriCorps Cuts Would Devastate [TOWN/PROGRAM NAME]

Dear Editor:

Paragraph 1

Briefly – in 1-2 sentences -- make a clear reference to the piece to which the LTE is responding. This does not necessarily need to be critical of the article itself but should point to a specific issue or assertion in the piece that is relevant to your program’s work.

* For example, “As covered in last week’s issue, our school board is wrestling with a lackluster availability of afterschool help. Missing from the debate, however, is how Congress has proposed cuts to AmeriCorps would gut existing support provided by [PROGRAM NAME].

In an attempt to reduce federal spending, Congress’ current fiscal year 2024 budget cuts AmeriCorps. But cutting AmeriCorps is shortsighted. It would result in the elimination of critical programs that address pressing social and economic challenges in our community.”

Paragraph 2

*Because of AmeriCorps...* In 1-3 sentences, the writer should use the next paragraph to describe your connection to AmeriCorps, how AmeriCorps funding and AmeriCorps members are making a tangible impact in the community and what is at stake.

* Consider sharing a data point on AmeriCorps’ impact statewide or in your focus area (i.e. education, disaster relief, conservation, public health). If you need help finding state or national statistics, *contact Shanelle Oliver at* *soliver@cityyear.org**.*
* Include a single, powerful anecdote that explains what is at stake if Congress cuts funding for AmeriCorps. How would the loss of AmeriCorps funding or service positions jeopardize the services you provide and your community rely upon, i.e. “Without AmeriCorps we would not be able to…”

Final Paragraph

Restate AmeriCorps’ impact in the community and include a clear call to action, which can be very direct.

* For example, “While the school board’s proposed expansion of afterschool programming is much needed, we also can’t afford to lose what we have. We wouldn’t have [PROGRAM NAME] afterschool programming without a fully funded AmeriCorps, and we need Congress to protect it. Our community should remind [MEMBER OF CONGRESS’ NAME] that gutting AmeriCorps will harm our schools and leave students behind.”
* “AmeriCorps has a strong history of bipartisan support among our nation’s leaders.  I am counting on our congressional delegation, including [YOUR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS] to protect this cost-effective, results-driven resource for our community.”

*NAME*

*TITLE*

*ORGANIZATION*

*CITY, STATE*

*EMAIL*

*PHONE NUMBER*