



Tips for Writing a Letter to the Editor (LTE)

(Updated February 6, 2025)

Letters to the editor (LTE) are widely read not only by members of Congress and their staff, but also 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.

Keep these helpful tips in mind when writing an LTE:

- **Respond to recent news:** Often, LTEs respond to a specific article that recently ran in the paper, so it is important to closely monitor for any news regarding appropriations, AmeriCorps, local programs, and/or community service more generally. However, newspapers also accept LTEs that do not refer to a specific article. It's a good idea to look at the LTEs in the paper you are targeting to get a flavor for the types of letters they publish.
- **Stay local:** Consider submitting to a smaller local paper, not just the nearest big city paper. You'll have a better chance of getting published, and still get noticed by your members of Congress.
- **Keep your letter short, focused, and interesting.** Stay focused on one (or, at the most, two) main point(s). *In this case, protecting AmeriCorps funding.* Include interesting facts, relevant personal experience, and any local connections to the issue. Wrap your letter up by explaining what you think needs to happen now and making a call to action. If you are trying to influence a legislator(s), refer to them by name.
- **Stick to word limits:** 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 – many only allow about 150 words.
- **Submitting your LTE:** 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.
- **Keep us posted:** Voices for National Service is available to help edit your LTE and/or offer advice on placement, if needed. Please also let us know when your LTE is published, so we can pass it along to your members of Congress and amplify it on our social media channels. Contact Shanelle Oliver, soliver2@cityyear.org, for assistance.