

**RAISE YOUR VOICE FOR NATIONAL SERVICE**

**LETTER TO THE EDITOR TOOLKIT**

March 2017

Tips for Placing a Letter to the Editor

Letters to the editor are a great tool for letting elected officials and other local leaders know what matters to local residents. By submitting a letter to the editor of your local newspaper, you can let others in your community know why national service matters to you – and why it should matter to them, too.

Here are some tips to writing an effective letter to the editor (LTE) and getting it placed.

1. **Local matters**. Make sure that your letter has local information (e.g. talk about how AmeriCorps/Senior Corps/national service has helped your city or community).
2. **Share your expertise.** Include your relevant qualifications to the topic in your letter (e.g. if you’re an AmeriCorps alum or run an AmeriCorps program, say so; if your organization hosts Senior Corps volunteers, talk about your program, etc.).
3. **Refer to the legislator(s) you are trying to influence by name**. In almost all cases, if your letter includes a legislator’s name, their staff will give them the letter to read personally.
4. **Be timely**. If you’re responding to a specific story or op-ed that ran in your paper, do so within two or three days of its publication (the sooner the better).
5. **Keep your letter short, focused, and interesting**. In general, letters should be 150 words or less; stay focused on one (or, at the most, two) main point(s). 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 by making a call to action. If your letter is longer than 150 words, it will likely be edited or not printed (visit your paper’s website for specific word guidelines).
6. **Follow the paper’s directions**. Information on how and to whom to submit a letter-to-the-editor is usually found right on the letters page in your paper. This often includes guidelines on what the paper looks for in LTEs.  Follow these guidelines to increase the likelihood that your letter will be printed. If you can’t find the information you need, call the paper and ask how to go about submitting a letter.
7. **Include your contact information**. Be sure to include your name, address, and daytime phone number. The paper will contact you before printing your letter. Do not include attachments in your email.
8. **Share your letter to the editor on social media.** Once your letter is published, share the link to the letter on social media. This will help spread the word about national service and its role in your community.

Template Letter to the Editor

Please feel encouraged to use and customize the template letter below.

Dear Editor,

According to recent news reports, the White House may introduce a fiscal year 2018 budget proposal that eliminates the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) in an attempt to reduce federal spending. Eliminating CNCS, and its core programs including AmeriCorps and Senior Corps, would have a crippling impact on our community, devastating local organizations that leverage AmeriCorps and Senior Corps funding to engage citizens in service and to cultivate matching support from non-federal sources.

National service programs not only provide vital services to local residents here in CITY/STATE. These programs also provide a pathway to employment for young Americans. Through their service, AmeriCorps members gain skills and experience, develop professional networks, and earn an education award that can reduce the cost of college.

AmeriCorps and Senior Corps have a history of bipartisan support. I am counting on MEMBERS OF CONGRESS to continue that legacy of support for this cost-effective, results-driven resource for our community.

NAME, TITLE, ORGANIZATION

CONTACT INFORMATION