

Tips for Writing a Letter to the Editor

Letters to the editor are read carefully by members of Congress and their staff to take the pulse of their constituents, so they really have an impact!

1. Make your letter personal.

It's best if your letter relays personal experiences that are relevant events or situations in your community. Think about what the radio is like in your city or town – is there news happening in your town that is not getting covered? Do you ever hear local musicians on the radio?

2. Be concise and keep it short.

Editors cut from the bottom, so make sure to put your main point up top. Write short, punchy sentences, grouped in two or three paragraphs. 200 words is a typical limit.

3. State your point early and clearly.

You don't need a long introduction to the subject. Focus on one or two key points that you want to make. For example: Talk about why this issue matters locally, and what you hope to achieve/why the member of Congress should support the bill. Reference facts — don't make false or misleading statements.

4. Be witty but don't cross the line of good taste.

Use humor, irony, or even a hint of anger, but don't be nasty or offensive.

5. Proofread.

Publications rarely edit and will instead select well-written and grammatically correct letters. Proofread, spell check and grammar check. Make it easy to publish your letter.

6. Include your contact information.

Include your full name, address, e-mail and daytime phone number. Without this info, your letter may not be printed. Most publications will want to call the writer to confirm authenticity (that you are using your correct name and that you did in fact write the letter). But don't worry; usually they won't publish your contact info.

To find local media outlets/newspapers near you and their editors' e-mail, visit:

<http://www.congress.org/congressorg/dbq/media>

Remember to check length and format requirements for your letter to the editor. Specifications can usually be found on the newspaper's website or editorial page.

Let us know how it goes!

Once your letter is printed, forward a copy to: info@freepress.net



Facts about Low Power FM and the Local Community Radio Act:

Basic information on low power FM (LPFM) radio.

- LPFMs are small stations operating at 100 watts or less – on par with the power of a household light bulb. Because of their small broadcast radius, typically 3 to 5 miles, LPFMs are a uniquely local medium.
- The Local Community Radio Act (H.R. 1147 / S.592) would open up the airwaves and license hundreds, if not thousands, of new LPFM stations across the country.

As a uniquely local outlet, LPFM stations directly serve their communities.

- LPFM licenses are granted to high schools, churches, nonprofits, labor unions and civic organizations that understand the needs of their local community.
- LPFM stations give politicians, clergy and civil rights leaders a forum to discuss local issues.
- LPFM stations provide essential emergency services for local communities during times of crisis.

LPFM stations serve communities and groups that are often shut out of the ratings-driven mainstream media.

- LPFM stations provide opportunities for people of color and women to run local radio stations and work in radio programming.
- People of color make up 33 percent of the U.S. population, yet own just 7.7 percent of all local AM and FM stations.
- Women make up 51 percent of the U.S. population but own just 6 percent of all radio stations.
- Creating more LPFM stations won't address all of our needs for more media diversity, but these outlets are a step in the right direction.

Everyone benefits from LPFM stations.

- **Women and People of Color:** LPFM stations provide opportunities for people of color and women to run local radio stations and address issues often neglected by commercial radio stations.
- **Religious Groups:** LPFM stations allow religious groups to broadcast their church services, reaching new audiences and people who are unable to leave their homes.
- **Musicians:** LPFM stations play the music of local artists and a variety of genres unavailable on the rest of the radio dial.
- **Farmers:** As farm radio declines, LPFM stations provide farmers and rural communities with the local information they need.



Sample Letter to the Editor:

We encourage you to write your own letter about your experience with the radio in your community or how your town or city could benefit from more local radio, but here is a model you can work from if you want. Be sure to personalize the letter by editing anything that is highlighted.

Dear Editor,

Like many of my neighbors and friends, I am fed up with the lack of news and information on the commercial radio dial. But Congress has an incredible opportunity right now to allow community groups, schools and churches to use available radio airwaves for local non-commercial radio stations.

The Local Community Radio Act, a bill that has bi-partisan support from nearly 100 members of Congress, will license hundreds – if not thousands – of low power FM radio stations in communities nationwide.

Because of their small broadcast radius, typically 3 to 5 miles, LPFMs are a uniquely local medium. They offer a forum for public debate and discourse, and provide space for local musicians and issues too often neglected by other commercial outlets.

But this legislation needs the support of Representative _____ (Party ID - District). I urge him/her to support H.R.1147, the Local Community Radio Act.

Sincerely,
Your name
City/Town