



# Advocacy Tip

## Letters to the Editor

Letters to the editor are among the most highly read items in a newspaper. Elected officials pay close attention to them and treat them as a gauge of community interests. When writing a letter to the editor, do not forget to send it to your neighborhood and community newspapers. Their readership may not be in the tens of thousands, but their audience will read an entire edition. To find out submission information for your local paper, visit [www.mnnews.com](http://www.mnnews.com).

### Tips for Writing a Letter:

1. All letters should be typed or neatly written. They should be signed and include your home address and your home and work phone numbers. The editors may want to contact you prior to printing, and if they cannot, they are less likely to print your letter.
2. Letters should be between 150 and 200 words. If your letter is longer than that, it may be significantly cut or not printed at all. Be sure to have a clear message.
3. Timing is important. If the issue you write about is in the news, your letter is more likely to be printed.
4. Keep your tone reasonable and lively. Personal attacks or emotional or bland messages are less likely to be printed.
5. Verify the facts and quotes you cite in your letter. Your credibility is diminished if you cannot get the facts straight in a public forum.

--above, from the University of Minnesota's Grassroots campaign

And, from [http://www.chow.com/how\\_8921\\_write-letter-editor.html](http://www.chow.com/how_8921_write-letter-editor.html)

- Think of **new ways** to discuss the topic and present unique solutions to the problem.
- Write clearly and concisely, following the limitations usually given on the editorial page or letters-to-the-editor page.
- Mail, **fax or e-mail** your letter to the address listed for the publication.
- Keep in mind that most publications verify by phone or in writing that you, and not someone attributing these opinions to you, authored the letter.
- Publications rarely edit and, instead, select well-written and grammatically correct letters. Make it easy to publish yours.
- If your letter is going to be shortened, it will usually be the final paragraphs, so don't save your point for the end.