



How to Write and Submit an Op-Ed

Writing an op-ed for a local newspaper is an influential way to insert NARFE's viewpoint into an ongoing conversation or one you want to generate in the community. An op-ed is a newspaper article that expresses an opinion about an issue in the news. The name op-ed comes from its usual location in the paper, opposite the editorial page.

Step #1: Choose when to submit an op-ed.

Op-eds are most likely to be placed when there is a public debate or coverage of a particular issue, perhaps occurring around cutting the deficit or raising the debt limit. In some cases, they may also be tied to events. However, those pieces are generally more difficult to place if they do not have a strong and relevant news hook. The biggest rule about when to submit is to submit before it's too late – news goes stale very fast.

Still wondering if you should write and submit an op-ed? Click [here](#) to see a recent example of an op-ed written by a NARFE member that was published in *The Press of Atlantic City*.

Step #2: Choose what to write in an op-ed.

Many regional newspapers receive pieces with a national angle from newspaper syndicates, so it's best to emphasize a local/regional angle, if possible (e.g., a personal story, local statistic about the largest local federal agency, and/or a local event).

Step #3: Write the op-ed.

Op-eds should clearly articulate the problem at the beginning of the piece (e.g., federal employees in this state have become the scapegoat for the nation's budget problems). Then narrow the arguments down to a very regional point (e.g., we can't afford to lose services like food safety inspection that federal employees in our state provide to us). Conclude with a clearly defined call-to-action (e.g., when voting on solutions to our national deficit, our representatives in Congress must acknowledge the will of their constituents and recognize what our federal employees do to protect and move America forward).

**Step #4: Choose who should ‘sign’ an op-ed.**

Consider regional figureheads who support your issue and determine if it might be more advantageous to ask them to sign, or cosign, the piece once it is written. Remember that the op-ed’s byline might not always be the person who actually wrote the words.

Step #5: Check your word count.

Newspapers and online outlets have different word count requirements for op-eds, but, in general, it is best to keep them between 650 and 700 words. Check the outlets’ websites for information about word count requirements, as this information is usually listed in their editorial section.

Step #6: List your info.

Always include your credentials and contact information, as most publications will require verbal or written verification that you have authored the piece.

Step #7: Follow up after you submit.

If you have not heard back from the publication within 24 to 48 hours, it’s usually a good idea to follow up via phone or email. If you receive a “no,” then you should consider submitting to another local paper or online outlet. If there are no alternatives, consider posting your piece on a blog.

Step #8: Posting your piece on a blog.

There are limitless blogs on which you can post your opinions. Some blogs, like the popular TPM Café (<http://tpmcafe.talkingpointsmemo.com/>), require you to sell them on the idea in the same way you must convince a newspaper to print your op-ed. Other blogs, like BuzzFeed (<http://www.buzzfeed.com>) allow you to simply post your piece directly.