How to Write and Submit a Letter to the Editor (LTE)

Writing a letter to the editor of your local newspaper is a great advocacy tool and helps create awareness of the need to protect federal retirement and health benefits. A letter to the editor (LTE) is just that – a letter written to a newspaper by a reader in order to respond to a previous article or to offer a newsworthy opinion.

Step #1: Choose when to submit an LTE.

LTEs are most often placed when they are written in response to an article/editorial and either point out an alternate perspective, or highlight/strengthen the piece. In some cases, it may make sense to submit an LTE that does not relate back to a particular article, but rather highlights a recent local event (e.g., the introduction of proposals to cut federal employee benefits).

Still wondering if you should write and submit an LTE? Click here to see a recent example of an LTE written by a NARFE member that was published in *The Chicago Tribune*.

Step #2: Choose what to write in an LTE.

LTEs should be able to stand on their own and make sense to readers who may not have read the original article to which it is responding.

Step #3: Write your LTE.

LTEs should be focused and direct. Trying to cover several topics and making too many points reduces the impact, so try to keep to one subject if possible.

Step #4: Keep it brief.

Newspapers and online outlets have different word count requirements for LTEs, but in general, it is best to keep them as short and succinct as possible (usually between 150 and 250 words).

Step #5: 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. As with op-eds, timing is everything. News goes stale very fast, so submit LTEs as quickly as possible.

Step #6: Follow up after you submit.

Most newspapers have areas online where you can post comments to articles. If your LTE does not get placed, consider going online and adding your letter as a comment to a story.