

Writing a Letter to the Editor

Writing an LTE, or Letter to the Editor, is a great advocacy tool. It is a concise written piece published in newspapers, magazine, or online publication that will essentially help create awareness of the policy issues surrounding federal retirement and benefits. Especially so when lawmakers are back in their home districts engaging with constituents, LTEs published during this time can have a significant impact as lawmakers pay closer attention their local media outlets and the key concerns raised by their constituents.

How to Get Started

[Click here](#) to find a directory of your local media newspapers and outlets. Scroll down to the “Local Media” and choose your local outlet you would like to write to. It will prompt you to compose a message, and will have a sample message for you to personalize in the message text. See the guide below for how to write an LTE.

This guide explains how to write successful letters to the editor to your local papers with an additional example included!

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

Step #1: Choose when to submit an LTE.

Often times LTEs reference an article that ran in the paper. Respond to an article in the paper if there is one that pertains to the issue you wish to write on. Otherwise, submit an LTE that highlights an ongoing issue (e.g. repealing WEP/GPO)

Step #2: Write an LTE.

LTEs should be written in easily understood language and make sense to readers who may not have prior background over the issue or topic discussed. LTEs should be focused and direct. Focus on one topic only. If you have two, write a second letter. For example, write about how WEP/GPO or COLA calculations have impacted you, but not both.

Step #3: Keep it brief.

Be clear and concise! You only have around 200 words or less to make your point. Obey those word count limits. If your letter gets long, write a second letter. Keep in mind, papers may have their own guidelines. It is encouraged to look those up or give a call-adhering to requirements will increase the chance of your LTE getting published.

Step #4: Potentially refer to your legislator.

If relevant and appropriate, refer to the legislator you are trying to influence by name. If the letter to the editor includes a legislator’s name, it will show up in their daily summary of press coverage in their state or district—staff may even send him or her the letter to read personally if it is compellingly written.

Step #5: List your info & submit.

Include your contact information. Be sure to include your name, address, and daytime phone number; the paper will likely contact you before printing your letter to verify that you sent it. Be timely and send your LTE via email if possible. If you are responding to an article, do so in one or three days, even same day if you can.

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.

** If you’re LTE is published, please notify us by emailing advocacy@narfe.org. Be sure to include the published article, if possible.**