

## How to Write a Letter to the Editor or an Opinion Piece

- **Your Opinion Matters and can have Impact:** Letters to the editor are one of the best and easiest ways to get an unfiltered message about an issue out to the community.
- **Look up Local and State Papers Online:** You can usually find the address to send your letter to the editor on the editorial page of the paper or on the website. You may search statewide papers online at the [NH Press Association website](#).
- **You can't be Anonymous:** When you send in your letter to the editor, you must include your name, address and daytime telephone and home phone number. Your name is needed because anonymous letters are not as credible as those that are signed, and the large majority of newspapers will not publish them anyway.
- **Tap into your Personal Story** Furthermore, letters to the editor carry a certain credibility because they come from average citizens, and the public does not view them with the same bias with which they view the rest of the paper.
- **Reference a Current Event:** In writing a letter to the editor, you generally want to begin by referring to a previously published article in the newspaper or to a well-known event. Referring to a previously written article helps make the letter relevant to the newspaper staff, and it is more likely to get printed. The reference to a previous article or event should generally be in the first line of your letter to the editor, to help set the stage for whatever point you are going to make.
- **Make a strong case:** Following your opening sentence, you should immediately begin to make the case for why you are writing the letter. If the news story that was written missed an important point, say so, and explain why it is important. If a news event did not provide the full story, give the full story. If someone gave an explanation that was unclear or misleading, clarify the point for the newspaper's readers.
- **Closing the letter or op ed:** You should include some call to action for the public. What exactly this is will depend on the circumstances, but it could be calling their legislator, attending a meeting, or writing a letter to the school superintendent. But it is important that there be some call to action to round out the letter.
- **Shorter is better:** The more concise, the more likely it is to be read. This means less than 300 words for a Letter to the Editor and less than 500 words for an op ed. However, you still need to make all the points that you want to make. If you send in a letter that is too long, either it won't be printed, or it will be cut down to the size the paper wants.