



## Instructions for Writing Letters to the Editor: Amplifying Issues Important to Texans

As a volunteer, your voice is a powerful tool in advocating for the issues that matter most to Texans. Writing a letter to the editor of your local newspaper is an effective way to reach your community and influence public opinion. Here's how to write a compelling and impactful letter:

### Step 1: Choose Your Topic

- **Focus on a single, timely issue that directly impacts Texans**, such as public education, healthcare, voting rights, or economic inequality. Make sure it resonates with your community by connecting it to local concerns, like how the lack of healthcare facilities affects your town.
- **Your letter will be most effective if it's focused and concise.** Choose one issue and one angle to address it, avoiding a broad list of topics. You can:
- **Write about a specific policy or issue** you care about.
- **Highlight the positive work** Democrats are doing for your community. Inform readers about how Republicans have broken promises.
- **Support a candidate** running for office.

Write about what motivates you—that passion will make your letter more compelling.

### Step 2: Research and Gather Facts

- **Use Reliable Sources:** Gather data and facts from credible sources to back up your argument. Statistics, expert opinions, and real-life examples make your letter more persuasive.
- **Stay Current:** Refer to recent developments or news stories related to your topic to make your letter timely and relevant.
- **Think about what you want to achieve from this letter:** Is it a call to action? Is it a persuasive letter? Do you want to explain an issue?
- **Ask voters to vote for Democrats:** At the end of your letter, the reader should be convinced to vote for and support Democrats/Democratic policies, or have a reaffirmed commitment to voting for and supporting Democrats/Democratic policies!



### Step 3: Structure Your Letter/Have a goal

- **Start with a Strong Opening:** Begin with a clear statement of your main point. Grab the reader's attention by directly addressing the issue and why it matters.
- **Make Your Case:** In a few concise paragraphs, explain your perspective on the issue. Use your research to support your argument. Personal stories or experiences can also be powerful in illustrating your point.
- **Call to Action:** End your letter with a call to action. Encourage readers to take specific steps, such as voting for particular candidates, contacting their representatives, or attending a community event.
- **Keep It Brief:** Most newspapers have word limits for letters to the editor, typically around 200-300 words. Be concise and stay focused on your main message.

### Step 4: Write with Clarity and Passion

- **Use Simple Language:** Write in a clear, straightforward style. Avoid jargon or overly complex language. Your goal is to be easily understood by a broad audience.
- **Be Respectful:** Even if you're addressing a controversial issue, maintain a respectful tone. Avoid personal attacks or inflammatory language, as this can undermine your message.

#### **Don't be afraid to quote specific numbers and key facts about your topic.**

- LTEs shouldn't be lengthy, policy positions. But, you should always use facts and specifics to inform your argument, and make sure they're accurate!
- Avoid obscure words and try to break down complex ideas to simple ones. If your letter is difficult to understand it is less likely to be published.

#### **Using local or personal stories can make your writing more interesting than simple repetition of numbers and studies.**

- Use your personal story to push forward the letter
- Insert your personality into the letter
- Explain from a local angle why a national news story is important to your community



## Step 5: Edit and Proofread

A few quick notes on how should your letter be formatted:

- **Keep it brief** - shorter letters (150-300 words) are more likely to be published and read
- **Have an interesting first line** to hook readers in/ You can highlight powerful lines by making them their own paragraph. Maintain a consistent writing style throughout
- **Check for Errors:** Before submitting your letter, review it for spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors. A well-written letter reflects positively on you and your cause.
- **Refine Your Message:** Ensure that your letter is clear, persuasive, and focused. Remove any unnecessary words or repetitive statements.

## Step 6: Submit Your Letter

- **Read your letter out loud** to edit any grammatical or syntactical errors
- **Have others edit your letter**, but don't let them change your voice
- **Follow Submission Guidelines:** Each newspaper has its own guidelines for submitting letters to the editor. These can usually be found on the newspaper's website. Pay attention to the word limit, format, and where to send your letter.
- **Include Your Information:** Most newspapers require you to include your name, address, and phone number for verification purposes. Some may publish your name and city of residence with your letter.
- Don't second guess yourself! Write that letter, and submit it!

## Step 7: Spread the Word

- **Share Your Letter:** Once your letter is published, share it with your network through social media, email, or community groups. Encourage others to write their own letters or take action based on your call to action.
- **Engage with Feedback:** Be prepared for responses to your letter, both positive and negative. Engaging respectfully with readers can further amplify your message.

**Final Tip:** Remember, your letter can spark important conversations and influence opinions in your community. By focusing on issues that matter to Texans and writing with passion and clarity, you can make a real difference. Thank you for using your voice to advocate for a better Texas!



### Sample Letters to the Editor:

Re: “To improve Texas schools, state must help — Our public schools also need support from the rest of us, writes former Texas House speaker,” by Joe Straus, Monday Opinion.

Thank you to former Texas House Speaker Joe Straus for his column on funding Texas public schools. As always, money is key. Today there are about 330,000 Texas students in private schools and about 5.5 million in public schools. Clearly, there are not enough schools to accommodate students who might want to choose private school.

Not to worry! Austin has lots of money for education, and with a price tag per student, new schools will spring up. For every student recruited, that school owner will get between \$6,000 and \$10,000. Then capitalism jumps into action.

As we’ve seen with for-profit private prisons, the new owners will be focused on one thing — profits. Less money spent on education means more will be left as profit to the owners. Don’t allow the education of your children to become a product to generate profits. Ask candidates for the Texas Legislature specifically whether they favor school vouchers. Don’t be distracted by vague statements about supporting education. Get a yes or no on vouchers specifically.

Hint: Every Democratic candidate will say no, they do not support vouchers. Most Republican candidates will vote for vouchers, whether they will explicitly say so or not.

Jan McDowell, Carrollton