

What is a letter to the editor (LTE) or listener opinion?

- Usually in a news outlet's (most often newspaper) opinion section of the either print and/or online edition. It's where readers/listeners can express their opinion about a recent news story. You check news websites for more information on if they take reader comments and how to submit them (also check local radio, TV, local blogs and other online outlets—not just newspapers).

Why submit a letter/listener opinion?

- **Provide another take on news coverage:** Letters to the editor provide community members an opportunity to note how people taking in that news outlets' coverage either agree or disagree, and worth noting something left out of the coverage or too much a focus.
- **Create public accountability and encouragement for leadership:** Elected officials often keep track of when their names are mentioned in letters and editorials, so LTEs can help get attention on issues in another way—either for something they should do, not do, or did or didn't do (e.g., vote the right way on a public policy, lead on an issue if supportive, etc.). In your comment you can encourage others to press elected leaders for bold action at every level.
- **Help educate other readers:** Research from the Yale Center for Climate Communication shows that the more folks hear about and see solutions happening around them, the more confident they are in the transition away from fossil fuels and taking actions for change. You can help by adding to the coverage by pointing out our regional progress and solutions you see around you. With all the dire coverage it's important to point out we can still make a positive difference with the climate math.
- **Show news editors that their audiences want good climate coverage:** News editors see what people write in about.
- **Something to share on social media and with your networks:** People often look to their trusted networks of friends, neighbors, family and colleagues to learn more on an issue and what to do. Share out any letter you submit that gets published.

Details & How-to

- **Length and clarity:** Usually, letters are about 150-200 words in length, but check your news outlet if you are not sure. Be clear, make one or two points
- **Entice the reader:** Use a news hook or personal story and start strong. Reference news coverage from that outlet, and if it works use an intro to reference a point in that article (and it could be your writing a letter on climate regarding a story that was not about climate but could have been (e.g. heat waves, other impacts that don't mention climate change but should))
- **Create accountability but avoid personal attacks:** If you're disagreeing with the reporter's or editor's take on something, explain *why*. Wherever you can, make sure to mention/name your elected in a call to leadership or note of accountability of what you as a constituents want, even if they're a champion
- **End with a strong call-to-action:** Summarize your main points, and emphasize why the editors and fellow audience members should agree with you!

Let us know other things that work for you and how it goes! weare@climatesolutions.org