



TIPS ON GENERATING A LETTER TO THE EDITOR — REMEMBER YOUR C'S

Current — Responding to a recent article in the newspaper or to a recent event is a great way to increase your odds of being published. Refer specifically to the article by using the name of the article and date, such as “In response to your recent article on the public plan option . . .”

You can do a search on newspapers’ websites for recent articles, using search words like “health care,” “mandates,” “Baucus” and “health reform.”

Construct your letter using the **EPIC** format:

E = Engage Your Audience

P = State the Problem

I = Informing about Solutions

C = Call to Action

Clear & Concise — Keep your letter short and to the point. Stick to one subject and check your grammar. After you have written your letter, read it out loud and listen to it. Have you made your point clear? Can you shorten your letter and still get your point across?

Most newspapers will not print letters that are more than 250 words, or two to three paragraphs in length. The shorter the letter, the better chance it will be published. You may have room on line, but why do you need it? Few people have time or interest in reading long rantings . *GRAB you audience with the first line and say what needs to be said in the first paragraph.*

Connect the Dots — connect the dots between health care and the economy; health coverage and community, health care and human rights, etc. Relate your topic issues with other socio-economic issues.

Controversial — Feel free to question or challenge what others have said or done, and even start your letter off with a feisty first sentence. However, be sure to avoid personal attacks. An argument based on merit rather than emotion tends to sway opinion.

Coordinate Your Efforts — Have as many people in your group send in letters to the editor at the same time to maximize odds of getting published and emphasize the importance of the issue. Whether they print your letters or not, you are letting the paper know what issues the community cares about.

Contagious — Maximize your efforts by sending your LTE to newspapers around the state and the nation. *(Remember.... if you are trying to get a letter published in a major outlet--like the Washington Post or the New York Times that expect exclusivity--do not send it to other papers until you are sure they will not print it.)*

Contact information — Include your address, e-mail and a daytime and evening phone number. They won’t print this information, but may use it to confirm that you indeed wrote that piece of art!

Carry Out Values – Use THCC’s Health Care Messages, found on our website: www.thcc2.org.

When your letter is printed, send a copy to your lawmakers’ offices and to THCC!

Some of these tips come from RESULTS, a nonprofit group committed to ending hunger.