

Durham PA Guidelines for Writing a Letter to the Editor (LTE)

- ~ Connect your LTE to an article, letter, or editorial that appeared recently in the paper to which you're writing. The more current, the better.
- ~ Focus on one single issue. We all oppose increased Pentagon funding for a variety of reasons, but pick just one to write about! Less is more....
- ~ To broaden the impact of your LTE, mention the name(s) of specific Senators and House Reps, as appropriate. This will trigger Internet alerts that will be seen by their staff.
- ~ Your reasoned opinion is what counts but, if you can, cite the source of quotes, statistics, etc.
- ~ Speak from personal experience, if possible. How has Pentagon spending affected YOU and your community?
- ~ Use simple (not academic or "high-falutin") language.
- ~ Maintain a moderate tone. Your LTE is not the place to be shrill, belligerent, or sarcastic.
- ~ Don't pontificate or condescend. Try to picture the next-door neighbors who will read your letter. Appeal to their concerns. What can you say to help them be more open to your point of view?
- ~ Don't plagiarize. Re-write! Your letter must be your own original work.
- ~ If you'd like another set of eyes to preview your LTE (and catch those infernal typos), you can send a draft to vickiryder@juno.com for a quick review.
- ~ Observe the publication's word limit and deadlines, and be sure to include your name, mailing address, and a phone number where you can be reached during working hours.
- ~ We believe our LTEs have greater impact if they come from the common folk, so we are not identifying ourselves as part of any organization or campaign.
- ~ You may send your letter to more than one publication although editors prefer to see letters tailored to the articles from their paper. (If you can tailor your letter in that way, it's preferable.)
- ~ Send a copy of your letter to Betsy Crites <mailto:brites@sonic.net> for inclusion in the monthly report for Central North Carolina. Indicate where it was sent and where it gets printed. NOTE: Some papers publish letters on-line that don't appear in print.
- ~ IMPORTANT: If you don't hear from the paper within 3-4 days of submitting your LTE, call the letters editor and ask if your LTE was received and when it will run. That calls attention to your letter and ensures that it's not lingering in their spam box. You might also revise and/or re-send it.
- ~ Don't despair if your LTE is rejected. Every letter -- published or not -- heightens the publisher's sensitivity to the issue and helps pave the way for the next letter that comes across his/her desk.
- ~ If you see a relevant letter (or article) in the online edition of your paper, write a comment. These get picked up in various ways.

Durham Herald Sun (250 words)

Bob Ashley bashley@heraldsun.com or Letters@heraldsun.com

Greensboro News & Record

Allen Johnson allen.johnson@news-record.com or edpage@news-record.com

News & Observer (200 words max)

<http://www.newsobserver.com/about/newsroom/editor> or forum@newsobserver.com