Letters-to-the-Editor (LTE)

Letters-to-the-editor (LTE) are great because we can get our word out to thousands of people at a time and get extra mileage out of media coverage – all for free.

Tips for Writing Letters-to-the-Editor:

- **Submit your letter in a timely manner about a timely topic.** Don’t let too much time slip by – news gets old fast.
- If possible, link your letter to something published recently in the paper (either a current news item, editorial, etc.) and respond as quickly as you can.
- **Keep it focused on one main point, concise and informative.** Editorial space is limited. A shorter letter has a better chance of getting printed. Word limit is about 200 words per letter but check the paper for guidelines.
- **Find out the publication’s guidelines** and stick to them.
- Be firm but polite: make your case without insults or rants. Don’t engage in personal attacks on reporters or other letter-writers.
- Write with the assumption that readers know nothing about your topic. Don’t use acronyms or “industry lingo” that only a few will understand.
- Use talking points that may be provided to you but don’t rely too much on them – always personalize.
- **Always proof read your letter before sending it.**
- Recruit your friends and colleagues to send in letters as well--the more letters submitted on a topic, the better the chance of one of you getting published.
- **If you hold a position (with an organization, etc.) include that with your signature to add credibility. It increases the chance that you’ll get published.**

Submit your letter
Always include your full name, address, and phone number. This information will not be published but many publications will contact you to verify your identity before printing a letter. Be sure to sign your letter unless submitted over e-mail. If it has been a few days and you haven’t heard from the paper, call the opinion section to inquire whether your letter will be published.

Richmond Times-Dispatch: [http://www2.timesdispatch.com/forms/letters-editor/](http://www2.timesdispatch.com/forms/letters-editor/)
Freelance Star (Fredericksburg): [http://www.freelancestar.com/contact/letters.php](http://www.freelancestar.com/contact/letters.php)
Daily Progress (Charlottesville): [http://www2.dailyprogress.com/forms/letters-editor/](http://www2.dailyprogress.com/forms/letters-editor/)
Roanoke Times: [http://www.roanoke.com/editorials/letters@roanoke.com](http://www.roanoke.com/editorials/letters@roanoke.com)

Did you get a letter published? Be sure to let others know: send it to your list servs, to NAMI Virginia, consider sending it to your state representatives, and others. Use social media (Facebook, Twitter, blogs) to spread the word!