



A Guide for Letters to the Editor and Op-Eds

Opinion pieces in news outlets have great power to sway public opinion and public officials, who are constantly monitoring the opinion pages in their district. Catholic Climate Covenant and Ignatian Solidarity Network are collaborating on this initiative and tracking engagement:

Please contact reba@catholicclimatecovenant.org if you have any questions and to let us know you have submitted a piece or that it has been published.

Letters to the Editor

Letters to the Editor (LTEs) are short opinion pieces that usually respond to a topic discussed in a newspaper. Keep your letter short and to the point and you will more likely be published. Each paper has different length limits, usually around 150 words; you should aim for 100 or fewer. With both LTEs and op-eds, do not send to multiple newspapers.

How to submit a letter to the editor

1. Select a newspaper in your area. Smaller newspapers are more likely to publish than bigger newspapers, but don't be afraid to aim high. Local and college newspapers are good options.
2. Select a news story that is relevant to the effects of climate change. The story you select does not have to be about climate change per se, but should refer to conditions that are also caused by climate change. The goal is to find a credible tie-in. Relevant news includes the following:
 - a. health stories;
 - b. weather events, environment, and food/agriculture issues; and
 - c. international security events.
 - d. Stories about votes and changes of office are also good tie-ins.
3. Write a personal, respectful piece that begins with the original story and moves to the context of climate change. *A sample LTE follows.*
4. Find the directions for submitting a letter to the editor for your paper. You'll find the directions by searching online for "How to submit *letter to the editor* at *Paper's Name*."
5. Follow the instructions. If you email the piece, it is important that you do not include your piece as an attachment in an email. Copy and paste the piece within the email body.

How to write a letter to the editor

Keep your piece short, simple, and focused on personal reasons. A long piece about policy is unlikely to be published.

1. Start by referring to a recent news story in your paper. Include the headline of the story in your sentence. This should be the first sentence or two in your letter.
 - a. Example: Last week's story *Flu Season Hits Home for Area Families* (January 1), discussed a major health issue for Pennsylvanians.
2. Connect climate change to that event. Climate change causes health issues, raises food prices, and leads to more extreme weather.
 - a. Example: But another event is affecting our families even more. Climate change causes increased respiratory conditions, and these diseases are likely to get worse as the climate gets hotter.

3. State a personal reason why you care about this issue.
 - a. Example: As a teacher, I care about the sick kids in my classroom.
4. Move to climate change. Refer to policy outcomes or lifestyle changes you'd like to see in your region or nationally. It is important to highlight your faith and our moral obligation.
 - a. Example: I am also a Catholic, and I stand with the U.S. Catholic bishops who have been vocal in supporting limits on carbon pollution. As Senator Bob Casey readies himself for this new congress, I'd like him to be vocal about our moral obligation on climate change. The EPA's Clean Power Plan will protect Virginia's families and our future. I want to hear Senator Casey support such limits on carbon pollution.
5. Sign your name, address, and phone number. The paper will print your city, but not the street address or phone number.

Sample letter to the editor (Published in the Cincinnati Enquirer 9/15/2014)

The spread of the enterovirus has rightly raised concern across the region, ("Hospital admissions spike for possible enterovirus" Sept. 9). Not grabbing the headlines, though, is the risk to those in our communities living near power plants from heart disease, asthma, and more. Power plant emissions also contribute 40 percent of US carbon pollution, furthering environmental problems and climate change.

As a mother and grandmother who cares about the welfare of all people and future generations, I, with the U.S. Catholic Bishops and League of Women Voters, recognize a moral obligation to mitigate these emission effects. I support EPA's Clean Power Plan to reduce pollution.

Deanna Spatz, Sharonville

Op-Eds

Op-eds are longer opinion pieces (generally 400-800 words) that enable you to introduce a topic and argue your own point more than letters to the editor. The term "op-ed" stands for "opposite the editorial page" or "opinion-editorial."

How to submit an op-ed

1. Select a newspaper in your area. Smaller newspapers are more likely to publish than bigger newspapers. Local and college newspapers are good options.
2. Write an analytical piece that examines climate change in the light of a larger issue. Connecting to policy and values is important.
3. Find the directions for submitting an op-ed to your paper. You'll find the directions by searching online for "How to submit *op-ed* at *Paper's Name*."
4. Follow the instructions. If you email the piece, it is important that you do not include your piece as an attachment in an email. Copy and paste the piece within the email body.
5. Call to follow up. You have a much better chance of getting published if you call and make a compelling pitch for why the op-ed is timely, local, and interesting to local readers. Ask very directly whether they plan to print it; if the answer is no you'll want to be able to pitch it to another outlet in the area.

Sample op-eds

[The Roanoke Times](#), October 12, 2014, by Max Stephenson, Jr.

[Erie Times-News](#), October 16, 2014, by Pat Lupo, OSB

[Citizens' Voice](#), November 17, 2014, by Protodeacon Sergei Kapral