



## Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities

### *The Pro-Life Secretariat's Guide to Writing a Letter to the Editor*

Writing a letter to the editor to your local paper doesn't need to be difficult! Your goal is to write a short letter that:

1. Is factually accurate
2. Follows a path that your reader can understand
3. Is written in a way that will attract your reader

#### **Preparing to write**

**Get in a writer's frame of mind.** Before writing your letter, answer the following questions, and keep each in mind as you write.

1. Who is the audience for this letter? (ie, pro-life, pro-choice, in the middle, or unsure?)
2. Why is your letter important to them?
3. If you want the reader to remember one thing about your piece, what would it be?

**Do a little research.** Take a little time to read our fact sheets and gather a few compelling facts. Please feel free to modify and re-work language from the talking points documents we have shared with you to use in your letter.

**Know the requirements.** Check the publication's website to see if they include details for submission requirements for a letter to the editor. Usually letters to the editor are between 100-200 words.

#### **Structuring the letter**

##### **Open the letter with a salutation.**

If you don't know the editor's name, just write "To the Editor of the *Daily Hoosier*" (or whatever the title of the publication is).

##### **Body of Letter.**

Set up the issue you would like to discuss in the first couple of lines. What news are you responding to? Explain what your main point is (ie, a falsehood you are correcting or an important idea you are offering for consideration). Make sure to explain why this thought is relevant *now*. Link your issue to something that is as recent and newsworthy as possible.

Focus on the main issue as narrowly as you can. You don't need to explain everything or share every fact in one short letter.

When you do make a point, offer clear details that support any claim you make. If you have space, you can add research or even a short personal story if one is relevant. If you use any research, cite your sources.

Always seek to use respectful language that could truly reach someone on the other side. The goal is to share the truth in love, not just to say something clever to get under someone's skin.

### **Conclude**

Summarize what you hope your readers will come away with in a succinct line.

### **Pitching the letter**

Review your letter to make sure it exactly fits the submission requirements of your publication, in length and every other respect.

Send the letter to the email address of the editor of the publication. Place the content of the letter within the body of the email itself and also as an attachment. Include your name, address, and phone number in the email.

### **If you get published**

Email the editor to thank them! It means a lot. Then share the published letter with us, and on your social media pages.

### **If you don't get published:**

If an editor doesn't get back to you within one or two business days, you can ping them to ask if they are planning on publishing it. If they do not respond and you want to have the letter published while the issue is still relevant, then write an email giving the editor notice that you are withdrawing your letter from consideration. Then, you can revise your letter to fit another publication and submit it there.

Editors are busy, but go ahead and ask them (if you think it appropriate) why the letter did not fit their needs. Let them know that you may hope to submit to them again in the future.

Even experienced writers often must submit to a publication a few times before getting published. Building relationships with editors takes time. Try to get to know your local editors and reporters. Send them your information and offer yourself as a source for their stories on abortion and related issues.

Always save your unpublished letters in case you need to use their content in the future. None of your work needs to go to waste!