

## Tips for Writing Letters to the Editor

**Letters to the Editor (LTEs)** are a great (and quick) way to respond to articles. Make sure that you specifically identify the article you are responding to in your LTE and that you make your argument succinctly. Check word limits, since they're rarely over 200 words. LTEs are usually in direct response to a piece that has already appeared, rather than introducing a new argument in an op-ed. They also are generally reserved for responding to pieces that appeared in print, as they in turn will be featured in the print edition.

### **Structuring Your Op-Ed**

*Idea or Lede:* Where you draw your audience in and make clear what your op-ed is about. You can be witty or personal - just try to have a compelling entry into your piece. Find a way to use current news here to ensure that op-ed editors and readers will understand why you're writing this now. Just try to avoid making it too dry by repeating something people already know, or by being too cliché ("Imagine you're..." is a major trope to avoid in advocacy writing).

*Argument:* Your overall thesis should go here. Have a strong few sentences or paragraph here that will let the reader know what your point of view is. Use the following graphs, or "evidence," to explain why you're right.

*Evidence:* Try to give up to three real-life stories and/or data that will feed into your overall argument.

*Wind back to original assertion:* Having laid out the evidence, make the case for why this supports your idea or call to action

*Conclusion:* Circle back to your lede

### Some more tips:

- If you're making a call to action, make sure to do it in a way that doesn't sound too much like an email appeal, which can be a bit more specific. Above all, editors are interested in telling a story for their readers, not providing a platform for an organization to advertise itself. Take care when walking that line.
- Look online for the publication's specific rules for Letters to the Editor submission guidelines. LTEs are generally between 100 - 250 words long. Make sure you check the outlet's submission guidelines and adhere to them closely.
- When thinking of where you might submit your piece, consider the audience of the outlet. Are there outlets that might not be among the more obvious choices that might speak to an audience we want to reach? Are there niche publications that might be more open to a specific angle than others?
- Let us know at [campaigns@aiusa.org](mailto:campaigns@aiusa.org) if you are interested in or have taken this action to write and submit an LTE to your local paper.

### **Talking points for LTEs around at-risk Afghans**

- The Biden administration has an opportunity to reverse course and show leadership.
- Americans and people around the world are watching, wondering what the future will hold for Afghans most at risk.
- President Biden, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, and U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas must be held accountable for the way the United States responds to the needs of Afghans whose lives are now at risk.
- The Biden administration should welcome more people seeking safety into the United States, at least 200,000 refugees in FY22. The United States must take every necessary measure to ensure the safety of the Afghan people and welcome Afghans as new neighbors with dignity and respect.
- Community sponsorship – including a new private sponsorship program – can empower people across the country to directly welcome and support our new Afghan neighbors in states ranging from California to the Carolinas.
- The Biden administration should immediately halt deportations to Afghanistan and designate Afghanistan for Temporary Protected Status (TPS), so that Afghans cannot be sent back to dangerous conditions.
- The Biden administration should work with Congress to secure emergency funding from the U.S. government for humanitarian response including settling people into their new homes and communities.
- The international community can support Afghans whose human rights are violated – the first step is for the United Nations to establish a fact-finding mission or similar investigative mechanism, with a multi-year mandate to investigate all crimes under international law, including human rights violations and abuses committed by all parties across Afghanistan.