

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 if you are interested in or have taken this action to write and submit an LTE to your local paper.

Talking points for LTEs

- Contrary to the Taliban's repeated claims that they will respect the rights of Afghans, Amnesty International documented a wide range of human rights violations carried out by the group,

including targeted killings of civilians, crackdowns on protests, the media and civil society, and attacks on human rights defenders.

- After escaping a deadly situation, entering the U.S. on humanitarian parole, suffering from uncertainty and an unknown fate, once Afghans' parole expires, they will face a new set of hurdles as they attempt to find alternative pathways to remain legally in the U.S. This can go both ways, either they will find themselves stuck in asylum processing for years on end, or they will be forced to go back to a dangerous situation where their lives are at grave risk.
- Once Afghans apply for asylum, they are not guaranteed legal permanent residency. If their asylum claim is rejected, those Afghans at risk, who had fled a deadly situation will be forced back to Afghanistan, where there is no sign of abuses by the Taliban abating.
- The chaotic evacuation out of Afghanistan compounded by an inadequate and ill-prepared immigration system underscores the need for Congress to provide a roadmap to citizenship for all Afghans seeking safety.
- The U.S. government must welcome, protect, and support our new Afghan neighbors and ensure they have a roadmap to stay permanently and develop real roots in their new communities.
- If President Biden is serious about his human rights claims and obligations towards Afghans at-risk, he should work with Congress to pass the Afghan Adjustment Act for Afghans seeking safety and a new home in the U.S.
- Rather than punishing Afghan arrivals for being evacuated, Congress has an urgent obligation to ensure they have a chance to become lawful permanent residents so they can start putting down roots in their new community and regain a sense of home.
- Just as Afghan refugees are resettled in the U.S., Haitian refugees at the U.S. southern border should be welcomed.
- The cruel abuses by U.S. immigration officials in Del Rio, Texas and ongoing mass deportation flights to Haiti are reprehensible, go far beyond the horrific photos in September, and underscore a deeper problem of systemic, racist treatment against Haitian and other Black migrants in the U.S. and at the southern border. People seeking safety deserve much better than this. The U.S. can and must do better than this.
- The removal of Haitian is a policy steeped in anti-Black racism, exacerbating the likelihood for acute harm as the U.S. government summarily returns people to a country struggling with concurrent political, environmental, and economic disasters.
- 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, Haitians, and so many others 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 refugees and asylum-seekers whose lives are now at risk.
- The United States must take every necessary measure to ensure their safety and welcome them as new neighbors with dignity and respect for their human rights.
- Community sponsorship – including a new private sponsorship program – can empower people across the country to directly welcome and support our new neighbors in states ranging from California to the Carolinas.
- The Biden administration should work with Congress to pass an Afghan Adjustment Act to establish a roadmap to citizenship for Afghans seeking safety in the United States.
- The U.S. has a moral and legal responsibility to welcome Haitians, Afghans, and all people who have fled their homes in search of safety. The Biden administration should immediately halt deportations to Haiti . The Biden administration should also immediately grant humanitarian parole to Haitian and other Black asylum-seekers at the southern border and restore access to asylum for all asylum-seekers.
- The Title 42 public health order that has been misused to deport hundreds of thousands of people seeking safety at the border was recently extended by the Biden administration, in addition to the U.S. government’s decision to re-implement and expand the heinous Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) program, otherwise known as “Remain in Mexico”. The Biden administration must stop all deportation flights and expulsions under Title 42 and MPP that place Indigenous, Haitian, and other Black asylum-seekers in danger when pushed back and returned to their countries of origin.
- The Biden administration must also end the use of arbitrary, mass immigration detention, including phasing out Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) contracts with private prison companies and county jails. Asylum-seekers and immigrants should be free and allowed to live in the U.S. as they navigate the immigration process, with the support of sponsors and community-based nonprofit programs as needed.