

WRITING A GREAT OP-ED & GETTING IT PUBLISHED

Local and regional papers appreciate it when readers take the time to submit issues of concern for consideration as an “op-ed”- the reader opinion columns often placed by newspapers opposite the editorials that they author themselves.

The opinion section of the newspaper is a great way to broadcast your message because it is often the most highly read; submitting an op-ed is a great way to get the attention of your policy makers and to educate the general public.

A few tips for successfully placing op-eds:

- ✓ Shop around for the best newspaper to publish your op-ed.
- ✓ Check out your newspaper's criteria for op-eds which give guidance on their expectations.
- ✓ If your newspaper doesn't offer criteria for op-eds, place a call to the op-ed editor to see if they're interested in the topic and present your perspective.
- ✓ Explain why your views are important to their readers.
- ✓ After you submit the op-ed for consideration, follow up with the appropriate editor.
- ✓ Most daily and weekly papers have a one to ten day op-ed review process.
- ✓ Many larger papers will require “exclusivity,” which means they will consider your piece only when they are the sole paper receiving it. Be aware of any exclusivity clauses before you call or send it to other papers.

Keep it short and simple

- ✓ Your point will get lost if your message isn't straightforward and clear. Op-eds are generally between 700 and 900 words, but some newspapers may want more or fewer to fit specific spaces on their op-ed pages. Some newspapers, such as the Los Angeles Times and the Washington Post, have weekly “Outlook” sections in their Sunday editions that use essays of up to 1,500 words.

Be local

- ✓ Give your op-ed a local spin and tie it into local sites, issues or personalities. Newspapers are more likely to print it if it is relevant to the community they serve. Remember to tie it into local politics and include how it is directly affecting your neighborhood.

Be persistent

- ✓ If your letter doesn't get published the first time around, try, try again.
- ✓ Try modifying the angle of the story while keeping the same underlying message, or submitting it to a different paper.

Spread the word

- ✓ If your op-ed is published, be sure to let NRPA know at public_policy@nrpa.org and e-mail the published copy to your Congressional staff.