

Tips for Writing a Letter to the Editor

A Letter to the Editor (LTE) is an easy way to make a BIG impact. Editors do not publish every LTE, but they do pay attention—especially to letters that are well-written and connected to an article they just published. Here are a few helpful tips:

Writing Your LTE

- **Make it relevant.** Relate your LTE to an issue recently (within the last day or two) discussed in the publication to which you are writing.
- **Be concise.** The first sentence should summarize your position. One of the biggest mistakes in LTE writing is using the first paragraph (or the entire letter) to build to the point. Most editors read 2-3 sentences before making a decision to go on.
- **Mind your word count.** Check the LTE guidelines for the paper you are targeting. If they give a word count, follow it. If they don't, 200 words are generally considered the maximum length. Many papers will not consider LTEs that exceed the word count.

Submitting Your LTE

Many newspapers have specific format requirements, so please check the paper's website before submitting. Always include full contact information for the author(s).

- **Follow the guidelines.** Follow the outlet's rules regarding LTEs and make sure to adhere to the guidelines on length. Spell everything correctly and pay close attention to grammar—letters are not usually edited, rather the outlets select well-written letters that meet their guidelines. Email your LTE to ensure timeliness. To do this, paste the LTE text into the body of an email—DO NOT SEND AS AN ATTACHMENT. You may also fax it, but sending it electronically is generally the preferred way to receive LTEs.
- **Follow up.** Once you have submitted your LTE, follow up with a call 24 hours later to find out if it will be printed.

Sample Letter to Editor

We've drafted the following LTE template to help guide you. Please feel free to use this version, or draft your own from scratch.

SAMPLE LETTER TO EDITOR ON OVARIAN CANCER RESEARCH FUNDING

Dear Editor,

The week of June 6, 2016, the U.S. Senate will begin consideration of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2017, S. 2943. As a gynecologic oncologist that practices at **[Insert your practice location]** I am writing to bring attention to the healthcare needs of all the women that service our country either as active duty military, as reservists, and as the family support team here at home for our U.S. Fighting Force. One of the ways that we keep our military and military families ready to defend our freedoms is by researching those diseases, like ovarian cancer, which can have a disruptive influence on their lives and on the military's healthcare systems.

Supporting cancer research is relevant to the U.S. military. Developing novel strategies for the prevention, early detection, and precision treatment of gynecologic cancers will ensure the readiness of our fighting forces while decreasing health care costs. Currently, 14 percent of Active Duty military and 18 percent of National Guard and Reserves are women, in addition to nearly 2 million female veterans. Of the 850,000 female service members, wives of active duty military and adult daughters of active duty military, approximately 11,800 could be diagnosed with ovarian cancer over the course of their lifetimes. Ovarian cancer is the fifth leading cause of cancer death among women with a five-year survival rate of just under 46 percent.

Unfortunately, the National Defense Authorization Act of 2017 contains language in Sections 756 and 898 that could wipe out many of the research programs run by the Department of Defense (DoD), including the Ovarian Cancer Research Program (OCRP), which funds \$20 million in innovative research each year. **[INCLUDE A RESEARCH PROJECT AT LOCAL INSTITUTION IF APPLICABLE]**

With the recent Memorial Day celebrations to remind us of the service and sacrifice our troops make, let's continue to unite in support of our women in the military. Let's voice our support for ovarian cancer research by contacting our Senators this week asking for their support of Senate Amendment # 4369. Please join the Twitter campaign using the hashtag [#ResearchNotRedtape](#). It could make a big difference regarding troop readiness in the future.

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME]