Writing a letter to the editor—especially to your local news outlet—is one of the most effective ways to draw the attention of your elected leaders. Congressional staff monitor media hits for their offices every day. Every time a member of congress is mentioned in the news, voters’ perceptions are influenced.

It is true that the larger the news outlet, the more the exposure to your opinion. However, smaller is often better: members of the House of Representatives care more about views expressed in their own congressional districts. Small-circulation newspapers print most of the letters they receive.

Keep in mind that every letter to the editor makes an impact, even if it’s not published. The more feedback a news outlet receives on libraries, the clearer they understand that libraries are relevant and newsworthy to their readers.

Template for a Letter to the Editor

Below is a general structure you can use to help you craft a letter to the editor. Be sure to consult the unique guidelines of your news outlet before writing your letter.

1. **Introduce the issue and why you are writing the letter. If you are responding to what someone else has written, directly address that article or letter.**
   
   **EXAMPLE:** As our lives continue to reel from the pandemic [reference article, if applicable], one institution that has stood by our community is [name of library(s)].

2. **State the facts using statistics, preferably local. If you do not have statistics, cite a local story.**
   
   **EXAMPLE:** Library staff at [name of library(s)] have never stopped working for our community during this crisis, whether their doors have been open or closed. Since March, libraries have served people hit hardest by the pandemic: people who've lost jobs, learners of all ages, people without internet access, and everyone who relies on digital resources for entertainment while sheltering at home. Just when we need our public libraries the most, funding is decreasing. State and local governments, the primary funding sources for libraries, are making hard decisions to address deficits, and many libraries have furloughed and laid off library workers.

3. **Close with a call to action or offer a solution to the problem.**
   
   **EXAMPLE:** Without relief, [name of library(s)] will not be able to offer the services [name of city] has come to rely on. The Library Stabilization Fund Act is libraries’ best—and likely, last—opportunity in 2020 to get resources to meet increasing community needs and reopen safely. It's time for the federal government to bolster, not abandon, America's libraries. Senators [Names] and Rep. [Name] should cosponsor the bill.

*Note: check to see whether or not your leaders have cosponsored the legislation: ala.org/advocacy/library-funding
Amplify the message when your letter gets published.

- **Spread the news as broadly as possible!** You can multiply the impact of your letter by sharing it on social media. Tweet it directly at your representative and senators, thanking them or urging them to support libraries. Social media addresses for your decision-makers is on the ALA's website: ala.org/fundlibraries

- **Ask your friends and library supporters** to respond to the letter by commenting online. If you want to see more coverage of libraries and the services they provide to your community, show the news outlet that their readers care. The more news content elicits a response from readers, the higher priority the issue takes for news editors, who decide what news to cover.

- **If you don't use social media,** email your letter directly to your elected leaders along with a note that reinforces your message, encouraging your leaders' continued support for libraries or urging them to make libraries a priority in federal spending decisions.