

How to Write a Letter to the Editor



Here are the steps you'll need to write an impactful letter to the editor in support of increased federal library funding!



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 officials. 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 greater the exposure to your opinion. However, smaller is often more impactful: members of the House of Representatives especially value views expressed by constituents in their own congressional districts. Small-circulation newspapers publish the majority 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.

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.

State 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. USE LOCAL STATISTICS AND/OR EXAMPLES.

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 the start of the pandemic, 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. For example, [name of library(s)] provided [75 hotspots] to families with school children and registered hundreds of patrons for vaccines. Our libraries keep our community strong; to keep our libraries strong, we need to continue federal funding for them.*

3. CLOSE WITH A CALL TO ACTION. □

Reaffirm the main point, or offer a solution to the problem.

EXAMPLE: *The federal Library Services & Technology Act (LSTA), along with the Innovative Approaches to Literacy (IAL) program, are critical sources of support for our libraries, and it's vital that Congress keeps these programs fully-funded. Senators [Names] and Representative [Name] must support funding of at least \$206 million for LSTA and \$50 million for IAL to fully fund libraries in Fiscal Year 2022.*

4. AMPLIFY THE MESSAGE. □

Once 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. The Twitter handles of your decision-makers can be found on the [ALA's Fund Libraries Campaign webpage](#).

Ask your friends and fellow 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. Content that elicits a substantial response from readers will become a higher priority for news editors, who decide on what issues to cover.

If you don't use social media, email your letter directly to your elected leaders.

- Include a short note that reinforces your message, encouraging your leaders' continued support for libraries, or urging them to make libraries a priority in federal spending decisions. [Check to see](#) whether or not your leaders have previously supported library funding.