

# LTE and Op-Ed Toolkit



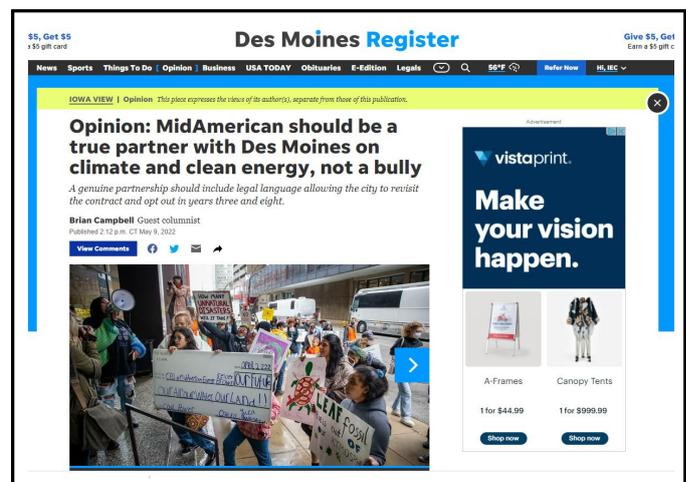
Iowa  
Environmental  
Council

There are a variety of ways to influence legislation or local policy. You can connect directly to discuss a topic, such as meeting with your legislator or community leader, making a phone call, or sending an email.

Another way to educate and engage leaders and the public is by submitting a letter or op-ed to your local paper or other media outlet.

Your voice is important. As a concerned, local resident, your thoughts and opinions carry weight with decision-makers, community leaders, and professionals.

Sharing your thoughts in a public forum (beyond just social media!) gives elected officials direct proof that people in their community care about a particular issue and want to see it addressed.



Just like calling or visiting your legislator is the most efficient and effective way to impact policy, writing an opinion piece for submission is an impactful way to share a concern with a large audience. Legislators and local leaders watch their local newspapers for important issues and messages.

## Getting Started

Consider the issue, local policy, or legislation you're concerned about or advocating for. Think about the statement you'd make to sway another individual and the facts you would use to back up your point.

Next, think about what you want the reader to do: cast their vote for a specific position? Contact their legislators to share their concerns about the issue? What will your reader need to be able to complete this action? Provide the necessary information.

Oftentimes an outline can help you gather your thoughts cohesively. Bulleted lists can also be useful. Once you have the key information, it's much easier to fill in the rest!

## Writing tips

- DO create a concise argument. State your opinion, share your expertise or reason for caring about the issue, provide supporting points, and close with a call to action.
- DO keep your language simple and action-oriented – this will help keep your argument clear and help with length.
- DO make it as timely as possible. Find a way to connect your submission to something happening now or that happened recently.
- DO be ready to back up your statements with facts if the media outlet requests them.

- DON'T submit your piece to multiple outlets in the same area at the same time. Stagger submissions by a day or two.
- DON'T submit your piece with typos or factual errors. Triple-check and have a friend take a look as well.

Finally, think about the number of words you'll need to make your argument and call to action. Also think about your topic - are you responding to an article? Are you writing on a new topic?

### Op-Ed or Guest Column

- Longer – 400-600 words max depending on the publication
- Can be written by yourself or with co-authors, such as a professional in the field you're writing about, a colleague, or another interested party
- Typically scheduled in advance with the opinion editor – sometimes several weeks or a month or two in advance – but you can also submit and follow up to discuss a publication date
- Must provide name, contact information, and links to back up any claims or facts included in the piece. Sometimes a one to two sentence bio and a headshot may be required.

### Letter to the Editor

- Shorter – 200-300 words max depending on the publication
- Typically more timely - written in direct response to an article, editorial, or other item recently printed in a publication
- Must provide your name, where you live, and a contact email or phone
- Usually published more quickly

## Examples

### Guest Columns

- Des Moines Register - Jan. 2022 - [Opinion: Rural Iowans would benefit from comprehensive regional or state-level planning for drinking water treatment and access](#)
- Waterloo Cedar Falls Courier - Feb. 2021 - [Guest Column: Invest in Iowa's electric grid](#)
- Des Moines Register - Oct. 2021 - [Opinion: Our kids' health is at stake. Congress can bring more electric school buses to Iowa](#)

### LTes

- Cedar Rapids Gazette - May 2019 - [Where is the outrage about Iowa water quality?](#)
- Des Moines Register - May 2022 - [Force MidAmerican to clean up its act](#)

## Submission Resources

Below are links to details and submission forms for major Iowa newspapers. Looking for information for your local paper? Send us an email and we'll be happy to help you track it down.

### The Des Moines Register

<https://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/opinion/2014/03/28/how-to-submit-des-moines-register-guest-essays/7038855/>

Guest Column - Email to [abetteriowa@dmreg.com](mailto:abetteriowa@dmreg.com)

### Letter to the Editor

- E-mail: [letters@dmreg.com](mailto:letters@dmreg.com)
- LTE Submission Form: <https://static.desmoinesregister.com/submit-a-letter>

### The Gazette:

<https://www.thegazette.com/submit-a-letter-or-commentary>

- E-mail: [editorial@thegazette.com](mailto:editorial@thegazette.com)
- Regular mail:  
Letters, The Gazette  
116 3rd St SE  
Cedar Rapids, IA 52401
- Or fax: (319) 398-5846

### Iowa City Press-Citizen:

- <https://static.press-citizen.com/submit-letter>
- Opinion editor email: [opinion@press-citizen.com](mailto:opinion@press-citizen.com)
- Preference is given to letters that are 200 words or fewer, and guest opinions are limited to 650 words.

### The Daily Iowan:

- <https://dailyiowan.com/editorial-policy>
- Letters to the editor may be sent via email to Executive Editor Caleb McCullough ([caleb-mccullough@uiowa.edu](mailto:caleb-mccullough@uiowa.edu)). Each letter must be signed and include an address and phone number for verification. Letters should not exceed 300 words.
- Guest opinions that exceed 300 words in length must be arranged with the Opinions editor at least three days prior to the desired date of publication.

### Little Village, Iowa City/Cedar Rapids and Des Moines:

- Email: [editor@littlevillagemag.com](mailto:editor@littlevillagemag.com)

### Waterloo-Cedar Falls Courier

- [https://wfcourier.com/forms/contact/letter\\_to\\_the\\_editor/](https://wfcourier.com/forms/contact/letter_to_the_editor/)
- 200 word max

### Dubuque Telegraph Herald:

- [https://www.telegraphherald.com/site/forms/online\\_services/letter](https://www.telegraphherald.com/site/forms/online_services/letter)
- Letter may bear up to two signatures, 250 word max.

### Quad City Times:

- [https://qctimes.com/forms/contact/letter\\_to\\_the\\_editor/](https://qctimes.com/forms/contact/letter_to_the_editor/)
- Editorial editor - Ed Tibbetts [etibbetts@qctimes.com](mailto:etibbetts@qctimes.com)
- 250 word max

### Sioux City Journal

- [https://siouxcityjournal.com/forms/contact/letter\\_to\\_the\\_editor/](https://siouxcityjournal.com/forms/contact/letter_to_the_editor/)
- 250 words max, no more than two letters or mini editorials per writer a month

### Daily Nonpareil (Council Bluffs)

- [https://nonpareilonline.com/site/forms/online\\_services/letter/](https://nonpareilonline.com/site/forms/online_services/letter/)
- Editorial email: [editorial@nonpareilonline.com](mailto:editorial@nonpareilonline.com)

### Clear Lake Mirror Reporter

- <https://clreporter.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/LTE.pdf>

### Mason City Globe Gazette

- [https://globegazette.com/forms/contact/letter\\_to\\_the\\_editor](https://globegazette.com/forms/contact/letter_to_the_editor)
- 300 words max, limited to one letter every three weeks

