

## THE DO'S AND DON'TS OF WRITING A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Letters to the Editor offer the opportunity to get an important message out, to correct misstatements in articles or editorials, or to highlight a pending issue. Local legislative offices read these letters to see what is being written about them and to see what their constituents care about. Editorial pages like to see a diversity of authors, so you have a good chance of getting published. We know it can be tough to put pen to paper, so here are some guidelines to start you off. And, we're always willing to review a draft or offer some key points.

### DO

- Be mindful of the due date and the rules of the publication
- Watch your word count— *Most have word limits, usually 250*
- Be relevant — *Be timely when writing a piece. The most effective time to submit is when an incident occurs or when bills are being voted on*
- Tell your personal story — *Use your experiences to explain why you care about this issue*
- Keep it to one message— *Try to stick to a single subject*
- *Identify any article or editorial you are referring to*
- Critique but back up your points

### DON'T

- Don't write a long letter — *If your piece is long consider requesting to submit as an op-ed*
- Don't launch personal attacks— *critique, ideas, not character*
- Don't assume that everyone has the knowledge or information base