



Op-Ed and LTE Framework

Overall Goal

The following document can be used by advocates to draft, refine and place Op-Ed and Letters to the Editor (LTEs) to draw attention to the benefits of the Affordable Care Act and ensure that we are promoting positive stories in the coming weeks and months in an effort to push back against Republican efforts to repeal the ACA.

Why now?

The ACA is at a defining moment. As ACA opponents push for a strategy of “repeal and replace,” it’s critical that we showcase the human stories of individuals and families benefiting from the health law. Each day that Republicans fail to find consensus around a repeal bill allows us to push a positive narrative in the media.

Why write Op-Eds and LTEs?

Writing Op-Eds and LTEs can be one of the most effective, and cost-efficient ways to educate consumers and influence public officials. The opinion page continues to be one of the most read sections of a newspaper, and is usually clipped by politicians, candidates, and organizations seeking to affect change in their communities. Furthermore, Op-Eds and LTEs show editors, reporters and others what issues are resonating with members of the community, thereby increasing the amount of coverage of topics like health care.

Op-Ed or LTE Structure

- Opening
 - Grab the reader’s attention in the first line. Make a bold claim, share a surprising fact or timely observation, or make a personal connection.
- Tell a Story
 - Personal stories provide a compelling way to demonstrate the success of the ACA and make complex policies easier for people to understand and relate to.
 - Stories don’t need to be a miracle or one-of-a-kind story, but *should* have broad appeal and connect with the reader.
 - Ask yourself: how have you benefitted from the ACA personally?
- Support your story with evidence/arguments
 - Facts & Figures (How many [STATE]-ians have gained coverage?)
 - Cost savings (How much have you saved? What have you gained?)
- Closing
 - Drive the message home. Reiterate your opening point.
 - **Call others to Action!**

Powerful Storytellers

- **Family that was previously in the coverage gap**
 - How have spouses and/or children been able to get preventive care and gain access to the doctor?
- **Grad Student**
 - As young people prepare for their careers, how has the ACA allowed them to further their education and save money?
- **Low-wage worker**
 - How has the ACA helped individuals who haven’t been able to afford or access coverage before?
- **Small Biz/Entrepreneur**
 - How have entrepreneurs and small business owners been given the freedom to follow their dreams? Have small biz owners been able to provide coverage options to their employees?



Helpful Tips for Increasing the Likelihood Your Piece Gets Placed

1. **Know your paper's policies.** Most Op-Eds and LTEs have a maximum word count of between 700 and 800 words or the former and 250-300 for the latter. Longer posts will typically not be considered. Additionally, each paper has specific channels by which to submit your post. Consult the publication's website.
2. **Be timely.** Is your story new and engaging? If you are responding to an article or letter to the editor that has been recently published, you typically have a 2-3 day window to submit a response.
3. **Be direct.** You have limited space to get your point across. Make sure your letter is concise, informative, and compelling. Grab the readers' attention!
4. **Get personal.** Share a personal story. Personal stories can make complex policies easier for readers to understand. How has the ACA affected you or your family? Why are you passionate about this issue?
5. **Think about your audience.** Editors are more willing to publish an Op-Ed or LTE that shows relevance to its readers. Cite any local actions or issues that have surfaced recently.
6. **Encourage others to take action.** This is your opportunity to provoke others into action. This will be a close election, and we will need all of our supporters to take action to win.
7. **Don't be afraid to call others into account.** If you are responding to a previous letter or statement by a public official, mention them by name. But do remember to be respectful. When referring to a previous LTE or Op-Ed, use the title and date.
8. **Be reasonable and courteous.** Don't *attack* any public figure or fellow writer personally. Avoid being too negative.
9. **Don't lie.** Make sure any facts and figures are correct.
10. **Be brief.** It's worth repeating. Be short and to the point.

When submitting an Op-Ed or LTE, be sure to provide:

- Full Name
- Address
- Phone Number
- Email Address

We always enjoy seeing and sharing successfully placed Op-Eds and Letters to the Editor. If you get placed, please feel free to share with your State Advocacy Manager!