

OP-ED WRITING AND PITCHING TIPS

WRITING TIPS

- When placing in local newspapers, make sure the author is local to the newspaper. Community Board Members writing a piece would be a great idea.
- Focus on local angles in your piece, ex. economic engine for *insert town* and how many residents work at the health center, local businesses touched by the business (supply chain), number of patients seen on an annual basis
- Make sure the piece is NOT a form letter, be as unique as possible. Opinion editors want to hear from people with expertise in the field or unique perspectives.
- Assume readers don't have prior knowledge of your subject, and avoid jargon and acronyms where you can.
- Make the piece relevant to today's current events. Use data and statistics, but be sure to check fact check any that you use.
- Get to your main point early in the piece and summarize your position at the end.

Sample Op-ed Structure

- Set the stage with the news hook or current situation. It's often helpful to start with something that most people know or agree with.
- Set up the problem
- State the need or action
- Explain your position
- Summarize your "ask," or the action that needs to be taken
- Conclude with a message of hope or urgency

PITCHING TIPS

- Before sending it in, always remember to see what the publication's word limits for LTEs and Op/Ed. Most daily newspapers have a LTE limit of 250 words and an Op/Ed limit of 650 words. Do not go over this limit, even by a few words. To find out this information, start by Googling "Submitting an op-ed to [name of outlet]." Oftentimes the paper will have a page with the word count limit and the email address for submission. If no page exists, you can look at a few op-eds that have run and do a word count on those. Weekly newspapers usually don't get many letters, so they may not have a limit.

away, be patient. Follow up by email or phone if you haven't heard back in 2-3 days, but many editors prefer email.

- In a market with multiple newspapers, DO NOT send the same piece to multiple newspapers. This will give you a bad mark. If you do not get a response after several days to one week, send the editor a very polite email stating you are respectfully withdrawing the op-ed from consideration so that you can pitch the op-ed to another outlet.
- In your pitch email and all greetings, be respectful and appreciative. Thank the editor in advance for his/her time and consideration. Courtesy and politeness go a long way.
- The subject of your email should be catchy and give a brief description of the op-ed, similar to the title of an op-ed.
- If the newspaper website lists the opinion editor and his/her contact email, CC the editor on the email that you send to the general submissions inbox.
- On the very top of the piece, make sure to include your contact information, quick overview of your piece, and any notes about time (ex: TIME SENSITIVE: CONGRESS TO ACT BY XXX).
- Include in the body of the email (no attachments): your pitch, a suggested title for the op-ed, the total word count, contact information for the author (name, phone, email, mailing address), the op-ed, and a one sentence bio for the author. You can also let the editor know you have a head shot available upon request.
- If at first you don't succeed, try, try again. There are 101 different reasons why your piece may not have been accepted, so don't take rejection personally. There's usually an editor out there who is willing to run your op-ed, so keep trying until you find the right fit.
- Long-term goal – try to build a relationship with your local newspaper and have at least two op-eds a year.

RECENT EXAMPLES OF OP-EDS AND LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sharad Kohli, MD, family medicine physician at People's Community Clinic in Texas

Austin American-Statesman

[Now more than ever, health centers need adequate funding](#)

May 1, 2020

Blair Lykins, director of Pharmacy Services at PrimaryPlus in Kentucky

Lexington Herald Leader

[Kentucky's community health centers need better funding, especially during COVID-19](#)

April 13, 2020

John Mengenhauen, CEO of Horizon Health Care in South Dakota

Sioux Falls Argus Leader

[Rural healthcare key for coronavirus treatment](#)

April 5, 2020

