

Turning Hearts Through the Power of the Press



Prepared by Concerned Women for America of South Dakota

An effective avenue to educate citizens with the truth of life issues is through letters to the editor. The “letters to the editor” section of a newspaper is an opportunity to make the community aware of an issue, influence the reader’s opinion, and communicate with your legislator in public. It is the most-read section of the newspaper.

Following are a few tips to help you get your letter published:

1. **Adhere to the printed guidelines** for letter writing provided by the newspaper. Each publication has a word limit:

- *Sioux Falls Argus Leader* - 250-300 words
- *Rapid City Journal* - 200 words
- *Aberdeen American News*- 250 words

Do not exceed the word limit or the editor may edit out your most effective statement.

The *Sioux Falls Argus Leader* accepts letters exclusively for their newspaper.

Some newspapers will phone you to verify that you submitted the letter. This is for your safety so that someone doesn’t submit a letter in your name.

- Check to see if there are cutoff dates for letters regarding political candidates.
- Type your letter, if possible, or e-mail a Word attachment.
- Cover only one topic at a time.
- Do not give your letter a title—the editor will do that.
- Don’t ignore weekly newspapers. Many people do not subscribe to a daily paper.
- It is best to submit a letter around the middle of the week.

2. **Briefly state your point.** Short letters are more likely to be read. For example:

I don’t understand why anti-lifers tout “reproductive health.” Abortion does not offer reproduction, it’s not healthy for the mother, and it is certainly deadly for the baby.

3. **Cite one of the paper’s recent editorials, news stories, or pictures related to your subject.**

Controversy is the life blood of an editorial page. Write while the issue is current. Don’t delay two weeks and expect your letter to have any impact.



4. Keep your letter simple, direct, well-reasoned and truthful. Avoid hysteria and name-calling.

When possible, include factual evidence to support your claim. Be able to document all of the statements you make. (The *Aberdeen American News* requires documentation.) For example:

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “One in four teen girls is infected with a sexually transmitted disease.”

or

The *American Journal of Health Behavior* (January/ February 2008) indicates that students in abstinence programs are 50 percent less likely to engage in sex.

5. If the letter addresses an issue before a governmental body or an elected official, mentioning the official’s name will be a certain way to get the official’s attention. Learn the voting record of a particular candidate. If it is a pro-life record, boast about it in a letter. If it is an anti-life record, express your disappointment. For example,

Delaying the brave new world a little longer, the [cloning] bill failed. However, Rep. Herseth Sandlin supported it, reinforcing her anti-life record.

or

The *Rapid City Journal* reported (July 19, 2005) that Sen. Johnson said, “America is in need of a Supreme Court justice who will unite us rather than divide us.” Johnson should be told that it is not the duty of the Supreme Court to unite us, but rather to interpret the Constitution.

or

Senator Johnson’s constituent letter reveals he was sleeping in biology class. He writes: “I do not believe that the fetus (regardless of term) ought to be considered by the law as a separate human being from the mother.”

6. Get the reader’s attention. A provocative opening works wonders. “Hook” the reader with a thought-provoking question, quotation, or an anecdote to capture the reader so he will continue reading. For example,

Rep. Herseth Sandlin made it crystal clear that she values a chicken more than a child. Herseth Sandlin supported HR137, which makes it illegal to take a rooster across state lines for the purpose of fighting as a sport. Yet she opposed legislation that would have made it illegal to take a minor across state lines for an abortion without parental knowledge or consent.

7. If you are responding to another letter, avoid repeating the negative, but rather get to the point and give your own positive message.

8. **If fitting, state your qualifications.** If you're particularly qualified to speak on a certain topic, say so; it can lend weight to your argument. One way to boost support for a candidate is to have people from various fields write letters of support. Are you a professional medical provider, a teacher, a mother, father, child, grandparent, taxpayer?



9. **Speak from the heart.** You don't have to be an expert to be effective. A purely personal view written from the "little guy" angle can likewise be highly effective. In fact a letter "from the heart" can evoke a desired emotional response better than a letter from the mind - as, for example, the blessing of a newborn baby.

10. **Proof read. Proof read. Proof read.** Ask a friend to proof read it. Make sure it is well-written, grammatically correct, and concise. Do not repeat the same thought or ramble on. If the letter is about a particularly controversial topic, you might want to wait and re-read your letter the next day to be certain it isn't overly aggressive. Provide your name, address, phone number and your signature on a typed or handwritten letter.

Keep a copy for your reference and check to see if the paper printed it correctly.

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Presenting Our Case for LIFE ⇨

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"Be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." - Matthew 10:16

Our choice of words influences a reader or a listener. The liberal media and abortion supporters are masters at glossing over the abortion issue by labeling pro-lifers with negative and unreasonable terms. We pro-lifers need to be savvy in our use of language in order to be effective. While we desire being referred to as pro-life, our opponents call us abortion foes, abortion opponents, anti-choice, or anti-abortion. Notice the negative in foe, opponent, or anti. We could easily call our opponents pro-death or anti-life. However, while describing themselves as pro-choice, they really offer no choice but abortion. They prefer to use the euphemism "choice" rather than abortion. The words we use are important:

You Should Say

You Should Not Say

Killing a baby during delivery _____

Partial-birth abortion

Abortionist _____

Abortion provider/doctor

- "Doctor" denotes respect and implies one who preserves rather than destroys life.

Commit abortion _____

Perform abortion/done

- "Committed" carries a very specific judgment.

Abortion facility/mill _____

Abortion clinic

Baby, pre-born/unborn child/she _____

Fetus or it

Kill an unborn baby _____

Terminate a pregnancy

- Everyone reading this "terminated" his or her mother's pregnancy - most at nine months.

Place baby in a pair of loving arms _____

Give her baby away

- To "give her baby away" sounds negative, almost calloused.

Womb _____

Uterus

- "Womb" is a warmer, maternal term. "Uterus" is cold and medical.

Abortifacient pills/chemical abortion _____

Emergency contraceptive /medical abortion

- Call them what they are. These drugs abort unborn children.

Research cloning/clone and kill _____

Therapeutic cloning/somatic cell nuclear transfer (SCNT)

- Cloning is cloning. A living human is experimented upon and then killed. It is not therapeutic for the tiny human life.

Embryo _____

Fertilized egg

Portions taken from "Words Are Important" by J.C Wilke, MD, Life Issues Institute, October 2003.