

GUIDELINES FOR WRITING AN OP-ED

Instead of writing an advocacy letter to your government, you might consider sending an op-ed to a major publication. They help to raise public awareness of the cause or issue that you describe in your piece, mobilizing your constituents to support your goals. They are quite often read by decision makers and opinion leaders.

What is an op-ed? An op-ed, abbreviated from “opposite the editorial page”, is a column or guest essay published in the opinion section of a newspaper.

Guidelines:

- Make your argument immediately. Spend the rest of the op-ed making your case, or back-filling with the facts.
- Identify three or four points that support and defend your argument and formulate paragraphs around each.
- Near the end, clearly re-state your position and issue a call to action.
- Keep the length of the op-ed between 500 and 800 words. Go online and look at word limit guidelines or call the newspaper to find out the answer.
- Get a sense of what your paper’s opinion page editor looks for by carefully reading the op-ed page every day and identifying trends that will help you shape your piece.
- Use strong, active verbs and everyday language (no jargon!), short sentences, and concise paragraphs.

Example:

US Subverts the Cluster Bomb Ban – Jody Williams

http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2008/05/24/us_subverts_the_cluster_bomb_ban/

