



HOW TO WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The Letters to the Editor section of your local paper is an ideal forum for sharing your opinion and story with your local community. Letters to the Editor show that an issue is of concern to the community. Here are a few guidelines for getting your letter to the editor printed.

Keep it short. You should keep your letter under 200 words, arranged in at least two paragraphs. If your letter is too long, your most important point may be cut. Newspapers reserve the right to edit the letters they publish.

Focus. The first sentence of your letter should explain why you are writing. Make it as easy as possible for the editorial staff to understand the purpose of your letter.

Make it local, make it personal. Explain how the health care crisis has affected you or your community. Include as many examples as possible.

Make it timely. If the newspaper has recently printed a story or column about the issue of health care, you can reference the article and use it as a springboard for your letter.

Use simple language. Easy-to-understand language is best and ensures that your message will not be misunderstood.

Positive language makes positive points. People like other people who are positive — an important point to remember when you are writing a letter to the editor. After all, you are writing to express your opinion and to persuade others to believe as you do.

Include your name, address and daytime phone number. Editors like to call to confirm that the letter was actually written by the person whose name appears on the letter.

To find local newspapers in your area:

Go to <http://www.congress.org/congressorg/dbq/media> to search for local newspapers in your area. It is a good idea to first confirm appropriate addresses for letters to the editor with the newspaper.

Key Messages and Facts

The following messages and statistics may be helpful as you draft a letter to the editor:

Messages

- The current health care system is broken. We must have real reform of a system that is unfair, inefficient, and too expensive.
 - It's just wrong for anyone who works hard and plays by the rules to be driven into economic hardship by health care costs.
 - The White House and Congressional leadership have failed to address American's health care crisis, helping health insurance and drug companies but leaving America with higher costs, fewer benefits, and millions without health insurance.
 - American businesses both large and small are struggling to compete in a global marketplace while shouldering the burden of our broken health care system.
- We must reform our current health care system to provide affordable coverage to ALL Americans.
 - Four bedrock principles of any real reform:
 - Provide affordable coverage to all Americans;
 - Control costs;
 - Guarantee choice of doctors and plans;
 - Make prevention a national priority.

Statistics

- Nearly half of all small businesses no longer provide health coverage to their employees.
- Four out of five Americans without health care coverage live in working families.
- In five years, health insurance premiums have increased five times faster than wages.
- Nearly half of all Americans who file for bankruptcy do so because of medical expenses.
- The top ten American drug manufacturers made more in profits in 2002 than the other 490 companies in the Fortune 500 combined.

Sample Letters to the Editor:

1. We can do better

The health care system in our country is broken. One only needs to look at the statistics to understand the magnitude of the collapse. [insert two or three statistics from above.]

We didn't reach this crisis by accident. The White House and Congressional leadership have consistently failed to tackle America's health care crisis, instead promoting policies, such as the Medicare prescription drug program and new tax breaks for Health Savings Accounts, that have lined the pockets of health insurance and drug companies .

America's health care system needs real reform. With American workers, businesses and health care providers as partners in the solution, we can provide affordable health coverage for all Americans within the current system. With real reform, the nation will be better off. Affordable health coverage provides a minimal level of economic security for all Americans, and allows them to save for retirement, plan for their children's education, or buy a home. Affordable health coverage strengthens American businesses, improves individual health, and lowers health care costs for everyone. We can do better.

2. A Business Case for Health Reform

American businesses both large and small are struggling to compete in a global marketplace while shouldering the burden of our broken health care system – and must to choose between providing health benefits or creating jobs. The health care system in our country is broken, and we need real reform.

The United States used to be the world's leader in innovation and business climate, but we are falling behind, in part because of health costs:

- Nearly half of small businesses no longer provide health insurance.
- U.S. automakers spend more on health costs than steel, a cost foreign competitors do not bear.
- Rising health costs diminish innovation and competitiveness by forcing American businesses to choose between investing in technology and paying for health care. benefits.

These problems are not accidental. They result from inaction by a White House and Congress that have failed to address our nation's health care crisis. Instead they have chosen policies that have created record profits for health insurance and drug companies but have left other American businesses with higher costs, fewer benefits, and millions more uninsured.

We must restore America's competitive edge by reforming our health care system. We can do so if business leaders and policymakers embrace real reform, which would provide affordable health coverage for all Americans, control costs and make prevention a national priority.