

## Writing Letters To the Editor (LTE)

Prepared by St. Thomas Aquinas Green Committee

**Sending a Letter to the Editor:** An LTE is written to a newspaper or online publication to respond or offer an opinion to an article, editorial, op-ed, or another LTE that has been published within the past week. As we approach the elections, be alert for print and online articles related to environmental issues that need further PR.

### Basic guidelines from **Catholic Climate Covenant** and **Interfaith Power & Light**:

1. LTEs should be submitted to the paper that serves the region where you live and / or work.
2. Follow the newspaper's guidelines.
3. Get your primary message across at the very beginning, and then spend the rest of the letter painting a clear picture of the problem and backing up your point.
4. Use stories, not statistics. Our brains remember personal and anecdotal details better than numbers – particularly when those details remind us of ourselves or place us in a narrative. Statistics can be useful, but use them sparingly.
5. Make it locally relevant. Many newspapers receive plenty of national stories from news syndicates, and are eager to print something that local residents want to read.
6. If appropriate, end your letter with a call to action and an opportunity to get involved.
7. Your own letter will be more effective if it's written from the heart. Don't copy and paste from a sample letter – instead, explain why you care. Adding some humor is a bonus.

### From the **Suds Jain Presentation at Social Justice Day**:

In 2013, the Mercury News daily circulation was over 611,000

In 2013, the SF Chronicle daily circulation was almost 219,000

If 10% of people read the letters to the editor, then you have 61,000 people reading your letter.

**From Catholic Climate Covenant:** Writing a letter to the editor has effects beyond your local community. Legislators assign their staffs to read letters to the editor as an important barometer of constituents' interests.

### Additional notes:

For the **San Jose Mercury News**: Send the letter to [letters@mercurynews.com](mailto:letters@mercurynews.com)

You need to include your name, address and phone number. They publish only your name and city. The word count limit is 150 but you have a higher probability of getting published if your letter is shorter – about 110 words.

The SJ Mercury has an interval of 30 days to print a letter again from the same individual.

For the **San Francisco Chronicle**: Send to <http://www.sfgate.com/submissions/>

The letters need to be limited to 200 or fewer words.