



# NRA-ILA

·11250 Waples Mill Road · Fairfax, Virginia 22030 ·800-392-8683

## Guidelines For Communicating With The Media

Few issues today are more misunderstood by the general public than the issue of gun control. Many of the commonly-held misconceptions result directly from the media's often skewed coverage of this issue. Letters to local newspapers, radio, and television stations to protest biased coverage of firearm-related issues help influence the media's presentation of this subject, as well as inform the public of the facts that support our position. Keep in mind that your letters do not always have to be negative. If you see a positive story relating to gun ownership, contact that media outlet to thank them and to encourage them to run similar stories in the future. Our ["Write Your Editor"](#) will help you identify and contact a variety of newspapers and TV and radio stations. Below are some tips to help you when contacting the media.

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters to the editor provide citizens with the opportunity to comment on articles and editorials appearing in their local newspapers. Studies show that the letters to the editor section of newspapers is extremely popular, and is widely read by community leaders and lawmakers to gauge public sentiment about current issues. Here are some helpful guidelines to follow when crafting your letter to the editor:

1. **Type Or Write Clearly.** Include your name, address, and telephone number. Papers often call to verify authorship. Newspapers generally do not print anonymous letters.
2. **Address Your Letters To the "Letters Editors" Or "Dear Editor."**
3. **Be Brief And Specific.** Letters should rarely exceed one page. State the purpose of your letter in the opening paragraph and stick to that topic. If your letter pertains to a specific article or editorial, identify it accordingly. Try to keep your letter under 125 words. Always adhere to the paper's guidelines, which should be clearly stated on the editorial page of the paper.
4. **Accurate Documentation.** Mentioning documented studies and statistics in your letter will enhance its effect, but don't overdo it. Your underlying message can become lost in a sea of figures. Don't make statements you can't back up with hard facts or figures. Avoid personal attacks and insults.
5. **Write About Current Issues, Not Old Topics.** Stick to current debates and issues. Respond promptly to anti-gun stories and editorials. Write in support of pending pro-gun legislation or against pending anti-gun legislation.

Don't become discouraged if your letter is not published. Most publications receive more letters than they can print, and will often print one letter as a representative of others. Most important, keep trying! Unpublished letters are still read by the editors, and can help them determine which topics should receive more attention. [Click here for a sample letter to the editor.](#)

### EDITORIALS

Editorials are a vehicle by which citizens can make extensive comments on articles, editorials, and policies. Like letters to the editor, editorials are placed on the editorial page (often opposite the letters to the editor), and have the ability to reach a large audience. When writing an editorial, be sure to keep

your piece concise and include specific information. The average length of editorials that are printed is between 400-800 words long. Check with your local paper concerning length requirements. A phone call to the editor is helpful, and is sometimes required, when arranging the publication of a guest editorial. Generally, you will have a much better chance of having a letter to the editor published than an editorial, but this shouldn't discourage you from taking the appropriate steps to submit an editorial.

## BROADCAST MEDIA

Although letters to the broadcast media will not be seen or read by the general public, they can help influence the programming of a particular station. Local radio and television stations compete for listeners and viewers, which means their programming must cater to their audience. If you complain about unfair, biased anti-gun programming, stations may see that as the potential for lost viewers or listeners, and thus, lost revenue in the form of advertising dollars. Likewise, if you thank broadcast media outlets when they air pro-gun stories, you help increase the chances that similar stories will run in the future. Remember, your impact will be multiplied when you encourage your family, friends, and fellow firearm owners to contact the station as well. Here are some helpful guidelines to follow when crafting your letter to the broadcast media:

1. **Locate The Station's Address In Your Local Yellow Pages.** Stations will be listed under "Radio Stations" or "Television Stations."
2. **Type Or Write Clearly.** Include your name, address, and telephone number.
3. **Address Your Letter To The "Station Manager" Or "General Manager."** When possible, call the station to obtain his name and official title.
4. **Comment On Recent Gun-Related Stories.** If your letter refers to a particular story, always identify it by the date and time it aired, as well as who reported it. Cite documented statistics and facts to back up your objection to anti-gun stories.
5. **Urge The Station To Contact NRA For Comments On Firearm-Related Stories.** Too often, NRA is not given the opportunity to refute anti-gun stories in the media. Let the station manager know that you want to hear both sides of the story. (Encourage him to call the NRA-ILA Public Affairs Division at (703)267-3820 to talk to an NRA spokesman.)

Remember, don't limit yourself to only letters of complaint. When you see a positive gun-related story, a friendly letter of thanks mentioning that you found the show lively, entertaining, and informative, can go a long way to ensuring similar stories in the future. Remember to mention that you are a regular listener or viewer, and you hope the station will continue broadcasting similar programs.

## RADIO & TELEVISION TALK SHOWS

Calling talk shows in your area is a great way to help get your message across to thousands of listeners for free. In addition to calling in to regularly-scheduled talk radio shows, do some additional research and call your local radio and television stations and ask if they have any open forums -- talk shows where callers can discuss any subject with the host. If so, try to get on the air to make short, concise, positive statements about firearm ownership. If there is currently a firearm-related bill making its way through the legislative process, the host may keep the topic on the air for several minutes. If not, then at least you can take comfort in knowing that your brief statement in support of our position was heard by the station's listeners.



You can also call talk shows and ask the producer if there are any scheduled shows coming up that will discuss gun-related issues. If one is scheduled, try to get an NRA or pro-gun representative booked to appear on the show.

**Again, be sure to monitor your local radio and television station, participate in these shows, and alert fellow gun owners so they may do so as well.**

#### **MEDIA CONTACT READY REFERENCE GUIDE**

To identify and contact a variety of newspapers and TV and radio stations, use the ["Write Your Editor" feature](#).

Federal Communications Commission (FCC) 445 12th Street, S.W. Washington, D.C. 20554 (202) 418-2555 (888) 225-5322 Fax: (202) 418-0710 E-mail: [fccinfo@fcc.gov](mailto:fccinfo@fcc.gov) Website: [www.fcc.gov](http://www.fcc.gov)

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