



Writing the Editor About Why Manufacturing Matters (Or Any Other Topic)

One of the ways we can get our voices heard is by writing letters to the editor to our local newspapers, blogs or to television stations. We can personalize why manufacturing and good jobs are so important to us, our families, our communities and our economy.

You instinctively know this. But for some facts and talking points to put into your own words, review our manufacturing matters tool kit at www.usw.org/manufacturing. Here are some other tips about letters to the editor:

The hallmark of a good letter to the editor is that it ends with someone yelling: "Hey, Martha." What that means is the reader was so intrigued or excited or angered by the letter that he had to tell someone about it immediately after reading it.

To achieve a "Hey Martha," the letter must make a point, make it clearly and do so quickly. The quickly part is a requisite of letter-writing limits. Most newspapers restrict letters to no more than 250 words. The New York Times cut off is 150. That allows no verbal flab.

It's crucial, then, to know what you want to say before writing. Mull it for a while. Decide on one vital issue. State it in the first paragraph. Explain it. Support it in the second paragraph. Give a slam dunk closing in the third paragraph, like some detail that will wow the reader and prompt them to yell, "Hey Martha." Make sure it's true, though, because if it's false, particularly if it's blatantly false, many newspaper editorial page editors will remove it.

This essay already has more words in it that the New York Times allows, so you can see that it doesn't take much to go overboard.

Here are three sample letters to the editor published in the New York Times to give you a sense of what a typical letter looks like:

To the Editor:

Inequalities in access to health care do not have a negative effect only on the health and well-being of the uninsured. There is a serious body of evidence to suggest that middle-income groups in less equal societies have worse health than comparable population groups in more equal societies.

These findings, reported by Norman Daniels, Bruce Kennedy and Ichiro Kawachi in their essay "[Justice Is Good for Our Health](#)," deserve scrutiny.

If they can be substantiated, then it is in the interests of the already insured middle classes to promote universal coverage and to work toward reducing other social inequalities. Simply put, making sure that everyone has equal access to high-quality medical care could make us all healthier.

Darian Meacham
Brussels,

To the Editor:

Many Americans get health insurance through their employer. So if they become chronically ill to the extent that they can't work, they lose both income and access to health care. That fact alone ought to be enough to scrap our current system and come up with a universal plan for everyone.

The rich probably can't even imagine the plight of being seriously ill and having no help available. But how dare anyone condemn plans that would assure coverage for everyone. Who among us believes that we ourselves don't deserve access to health care when needed? We don't know in advance what will befall us, what care we'll need or when. It's not a choice.

To allow human suffering and death because of lack of health insurance is beyond a moral outrage. It is primitive, uncivilized, barbaric and unforgivable in a country as rich as the United States.

Nancy Bennett O'Hagan
Swatragh, Northern Ireland

To the Editor:

I suggest that if Congress does not adopt the "public option" provision as part of health care reform, all members of Congress be required to obtain their health care insurance through private carriers exclusively.

Paul G. Bursiek
Boulder, Colo.

In each case, the letter writer's full name and hometown was published. Newspapers will not publish letters without that information. When you write, send along those details, as well as a telephone number. Typically a newspaper will contact you to be sure that you've written the letter and really want it published.

Also, if you check the newspaper or its web site, you will find an e-mail address where you can transmit a letter to the editor, making the whole process a lot easier. Even so, be sure to send along your phone number.