

Guide to Making Public Comments: WHAT?

What Is Your Topic?

- Start by having a good understanding of your topic and the reasons behind your point of view
- Note, it will also be important to consider your topic from the different or opposing points of view, though it can be helpful to do this once you know or decide who you will be communicating to (which is covered in Chapter 3)
- Distill your topic into a few key advocacy points

What Makes an Effective Public Comment?

How do you create a persuasive message?

- An effective public comment will be concise, reinforce a few key points and appeal to their particular areas of interest and agenda.
- Whether a spoken or written comment, it has to be brief, concise, easy to understand, with the most important points at the beginning.
 1. **LEAD:** The first sentence should be a strong statement about the issue and why it matters to you and/or the audience.
 2. **ARGUMENT:** In your next three sentences, provide evidence or support for your statement. Present facts, statistics, etc. However, don't overburden your audience with too many numbers. Keep your supporting facts short.
 3. **CONCLUSION:** End with a clear call-to-action such as: call your Congress members, vote for candidates who support your position, invest in XYZ program, or vote yes on XYZ policy, etc.

Effective Letter to the Editor Guidelines

- Letters to the Editor (LTEs) are generally short—150-250 words. Each media outlet specifies the length, which usually can be found on its website's opinions page. If not, call the outlet for the maximum word count. See links
- Most media outlets will have an online submission form for LTEs on their websites and/or an email address for submission.
- LTEs are written in response to a specific article, event, or editorial.
 - Begin your LTE with one sentence on what you are responding to and why this issue is important to you and/or to the media outlet's audience.
 - Present facts or statistics to support your statement, but make them brief.
 - Make a clear argument within the first three sentences or risk losing the reader's attention.
 - End with a call-to-action.
- LTEs must be submitted ideally within one week of event or article publication of the article to be considered timely/catch the attention of editors

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Below you will find links to government and newspaper websites and directions on how to navigate them.

- Local Manatee Board of Commissioners (mymanatee.org)
- Local City Councils - Manatee County has 6 major cities, each with an elected municipal government and a Mayor or Town Manager. Contact the city through their individual city websites to learn about elected officials, meeting dates and other information.
 - Anna Maria: cityofannamaria.com
 - Bradenton: cityofbradenton.com
 - Bradenton Beach: cityofbradentonbeach.com
 - Holmes Beach: holmesbeachfl.org
 - Palmetto: palmettofl.org
 - Town of Longboat Key: longboatkey.org
- Florida State Representatives in the House (myfloridahouse.gov) and Senate (Flsenate.gov/senators)
- Florida's Federal Congressional delegation in the House and Senate – type your permanent address into the “Find Your Member” search box (Congress.gov)

Below are some examples of non-partisan advocacy letters and other types of communication from the League.

[LWVMC Letter to County Commissioners \(lwvmanatee.org\)](http://lwvmanatee.org)

[Set Impact Fees at the Maximum Allowed by State Law \(lwvmanatee.org\)](http://lwvmanatee.org)

[Covid19 – League Urges Key Election Policies \(lwvmanatee.org\)](http://lwvmanatee.org)

[Friends of Libraries – we need your help to advocate for our county libraries \(lwvmanatee.org\)](http://lwvmanatee.org)

EXAMPLE from 2017:

Dear Editor,

How can it be that Congress is poised to take health care access away from millions of Americans?

The Senate version of the American Health Care Act (AHCA) would cause 22 million more Americans to lose their health insurance and 15 million fewer will be enrolled in Medicare by 2026, than under the current Affordable Care Act.

This bill would block people from accessing essential care. It removes critical safeguards for people with pre-existing conditions for everything from cancer to diabetes to having suffered domestic abuse. It even dramatically slashes the Medicaid program.

It is no surprise that leading public health and medical institutions oppose the AHCA. But given today's divided political climate I find it even more telling that polling shows a mere 17% of Americans support it. Perhaps that's why the Senate hid its version of this terrible bill from a rightly skeptical public as long as possible. Let your Senators know you oppose this bill!