

Tips for writing letters to the editor

1. Letters to the Editor are typically in response to an article previously printed in a given newspaper while an Op-Ed piece is similar, but, they represent the opinion of an individual writer. An Op-Ed piece allows an individual to express their viewpoint.
2. Your letter should be **short** (less than 150-200 words* for a letter to the editor, only slightly longer for an Op-Ed letter), **concise** and **to the point**. Choose one point to make (ex. Building a national memorial dedicated to disabled veterans) and stick to that point. * If you are using Microsoft Word, there is a word count feature to help you.
3. Your letter should **inspire others to take action** (ex. Make a donation to the Memorial).
4. The more interest **perceived** on a topic, the better chance your letter will get published, so ask your family and friends to write letters to the same papers, at the same time. The newspapers will then be able to select the best-written letter amongst the group.
5. **Tie your letter into a recent topic from the paper** you are addressing (or a recent news report – such as news on the Commemorative Coin Bill for DVLMF). For example, did the paper publish an article discussing veterans or veteran's issues? That is the best time to send your letter. Another great time will be **Veteran's Day** in November, take advantage of this holiday to send your letters again.
6. Write as if you are **talking to the editor**.
7. Let the editor know **what qualifies you to write such a letter** (for instance, the fact that you are a disabled veteran or caregiver/relative of a disabled veteran – if this applies).
8. To make a powerful point, you can **bring in a personal experience** (but remember to keep this letter short).
9. Letters that can **make a point in 100 words or less** have a better chance of being printed. Op-Ed pieces can be longer, but do not go over 400 words as it will be too long for most readers.
10. Newspapers **do not** accept anonymous letters; you must sign your letter with your name, address and phone number. The paper can leave your name out if requested, but they need this information to contact you so they can verify the letters authenticity or ask your opinion regarding any edits they may make.
11. **Submit your letter in multiple ways** – by mail, e-mail and fax. You can find submission instructions in the paper or on its website. Maximize your chances of getting your letter noticed and printed; however, if your letter is not printed, **do not** repeatedly send the same letter as this may annoy the editors.
12. **Paste your letter into the text of the e-mail**. Do not send your letter as an attachment as this may never get opened, unless your local paper requests an attachment.

13. **Spell check** and **grammar check** before sending your letter. You may even want to have a friend or family member **proofread the letter** for you.
14. Do not leave your point for the final paragraph as that is often the area to be cut when space is limited.
15. Brief, wry and sharp letters are the most likely to get noticed. If your point can be made tastefully with humor, this will make your letter more memorable.
16. You can find lists of newspapers all over the country and links to their websites at www.publishaletter.com, www.refdesk.com and the Internet Public Library (www.ipl.org).
17. Consider sending your letter to an appropriate **blog** site or **local and national television and radio news programs**. They may not read your letter on air, but may use this as a jumping off point for a story on the Memorial.
18. **Review your letter before sending it.** Did you use spelling and grammar check? Does the letter consider the reader? Does it communicate your point? Do your words inspire action?
19. In general, if the paper publishes something about disabled veterans, this is a good opportunity to introduce the Memorial. ***You can remind the reader that when the war's end and the media coverage ceases, we can't let our disabled veterans be forgotten or neglected.*** This is the message we want to focus on:

The American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial is a national civic awareness, educational and recognition project that honors and benefits disabled American veterans, their families, and caregivers in all 50 states. AVDLM reminds the American public as well as our policy makers that we owe a debt of honor to individuals whose lives have been permanently altered in service to our country. We honor the dead, but we sometimes forget the ones who survived military service with physical, mental, and emotional disabilities. We not only have to recognize their sacrifice, but we have to make sure that their needs, and those of their families and caregivers, are met. The memorial serves to honor, heal, unite, educate, and remind the American public and our lawmakers of the human costs of war, from the Revolutionary War, to present wars, to every future war.

Then ask for support and refer to the website – www.avdml.org.

SAMPLE - Letter to the Editor:

To the Editor:

American holidays celebrate our troops as well as our veterans each year; however, as a veteran myself, I wonder why we are not doing more for our **disabled** veterans. Our nation, whose freedom stems from the sacrifices made by our troops, does not celebrate and honor our disabled veterans.

There is a way to change this. The American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial is a national civic awareness, educational and recognition project that honors disabled American veterans, their families, and caregivers in all 50 states. AVDLM reminds the American public as well as our policy makers that we owe a debt of honor to individuals whose lives have been permanently altered in service to our country. We not only have to recognize their sacrifice, but we have to make sure that their needs, and those of their families and caregivers, are met.

The Memorial serves to remind the American public and our lawmakers of the human costs of war, from the Revolutionary War, to present wars, to every future war. Join me today and consider making a contribution to this long overdue memorial to say ‘thanks’ for what disabled veterans have done for us. Visit www.avdml.org to learn more about the Memorial.

Sincerely,

Your name (list military credentials here, if applicable)