

AAUW WA Guidelines on Letters to the Editor (LTE) or Op-Ed

“Writing a letter to the editor (LTE) or an op-ed is a great way to energize branch members, promote AAUW visibility in the community, and spread the word about important issues. These media outreach tools can be used to correct and clarify facts in a previous news story, oppose or support the actions of an elected official or agency, direct attention to a problem, spur news editors to cover an issue that is being overlooked, or urge readers to support your cause.” AAUW Advocacy Toolkit

Letters to the editor (LTE) are usually written in direct response to an article, editorial, op-ed, or column that the target newspaper has printed. They can also be a reaction to or notification of a newsworthy event. They are printed on the editorial page, one of the most-read pages in the paper, making them an effective way of reaching a large audience in the community. Letters to the editor are also more likely to get published than an op-ed and can be published in a quicker turnaround than an op-ed.

NOTE: Only AAUW Presidents or designated spokespersons can sign an LTE as AAUW. Check with your President about your Branch policy. AAUW is nonpartisan. **Do not** include party affiliation in mentioning an elected official or refer to an issue as a party issue. Do not "endorse candidates" or take a position on legislation that is contrary to AAUW's position. For more tips see [AAUW Tool Kit](#).

An LTE may be the best choice for your content if:

- Your topic has been mentioned in the paper recently, especially on the opinion page.
- You have just one or two points that can be succinctly stated.
- You can write a response to the topic mentioned in the paper within one to two days (LTEs have a faster publishing turnaround).

LTE and op-eds can bring AAUW research and data into your community conversation. You can also alert Editors to new AAUW studies with local data, and AAUW local presentations on an issue.

Examples of AAUW WA Branch Letters to the Editor

Example #1. A response to an article: Article in local paper about student loan forgiveness prompted Walla Walla branch LTE published in the *Walla Walla Union-Bulletin* (September 4, 2022).

“Thank you for highlighting the conversation about student debt by publishing "Student loan forgiveness could help more than 40 million" (Aug. 24), which highlights how significant this debt forgiveness program will be for so many struggling young college graduates, including first-generation college graduates like [name]. We want to add that women tend to borrow more for their education and struggle more to pay it off - in part because of the gender pay gap.

The gender pay gap in Washington state is higher than the national average with women making 78 cents for every dollar earned by a man in a similar job, according to the US Census Bureau data. "Deeper in Debt," published by the American Association of University Women, shows that women hold almost two-thirds of the country's student debt, and it takes about two years longer for women than for men to repay student loans.

AAUW-Walla Walla is grateful for student debt relief on behalf of Washington women and grateful to the elected officials who support women's education and equal pay initiatives.
Chessa Grasso Hickox & Nadine Stecklein - AAUW-Walla Walla”

Example #2. Response to the 2016 Presidential election results.

Here is a good example of how to write an LTE in response to a disappointing election result by focusing on the issues.

[Published in the *Boise Spokesman Review* December 14, 2016]

“The American Association of University Women is a nonpartisan nationwide organization of women and men who advocate for issues that are important to women and families. The membership of AAUW Idaho and its six branches - Boise, Coeur d’Alene, Long Valley, Moscow, Orofino and Pocatello - represents a diversity of cultural and professional backgrounds as well as political party affiliations. Our branch members have been active in community and advocacy activities in Idaho since 1909. We are united in our opposition to bias and bigotry based on gender, ethnicity, religion and sexual orientation.

Our disappointment with the outcome of the presidential election is not because of the political party that president-elect Donald Trump represents. Our disappointment is with the positions he has taken on many issues that could adversely affect women, families and underrepresented minorities.

AAUW members are active citizens at the local, state and national level. AAUW Idaho’s Statehouse Lobby Corps has been and will continue to be involved in advocating for legislation that improves the lives of women and families. Conversely, we will vigorously oppose legislation that may negatively impact them.

Julie Custer and Kathy Scott, AAUW Idaho Co-Presidents”

Example #3. Individual/member LTE on an AAUW event.

Individuals can write a personal LTE about an AAUW event or issue.

[Published in the *Issaquah Reporter*, February 11, 2014]

“Child trafficking heart-wrenching
Saturday, Feb. 11, delivered a pounding storm to Issaquah. It was nothing compared to the presentation I attended sponsored by the Issaquah Branch of the AAUW.

The speaker from Stolen Youth (www.stolenyouth.org) a Seattle based organization, offered up heart-wrenching facts about child trafficking – the sexual exploitation of girls and boys.

It is the fastest growing industry in the U.S.
Seattle has the third highest numbers in the U.S.
The average age of these kids is 13.

It only takes one day for a runaway kid to be exploited.

I am outraged. I urge everyone to look at the above website, to take a stand, to help stop the abuse. This is truly the human rights issue of our time.

Other ways to get AAUW in the local news

AAUW National has a great media toolkit but it assumes a more formal process than many of our state branches want to develop. See website [AAUW How to Work with the Media](#). Check with your Branch President if you are interested in writing a LTE, op-ed or working on media relations.

If your branch is interested in getting AAUW in the news, know that local news outreach doesn't have to be complicated. You can keep it simple and still be effective.

TIPS:

- Local newspapers usually have a preferred way to receive information. Check their website.
- Be brief. Make it easy for them to verify information. Become a trusted resource.

Some simple ways to start. You don't have to write an article; you can start by being a news source. Editors are always looking for news stories. For example, when a new AAUW study report is released, send a brief note to the local news editor who covers that topic. Add a local angle to your note, if there is one.

- Example of an article reports on newly released AAUW pay gap state data. *Spokesman Review* - [Idaho's gender pay gap ranks among nation's 10 worst.](#)
- Example of a local article that includes AAUW study information. *Bellingham Herald* - [How women's employment in manufacturing has changed over the past 20 years.](#)

Most common media outreach: regularly submit announcements of AAUW meetings, scholarship applications and awards, leadership awards, fundraising events of interest to the larger community like book sales and kitchen tours.

Example headlines of meeting announcements for branch events.

- *Shoreline Area News* - AAUW meeting to feature presentation on the Refugee Artisan Initiative (RAI) from Lake City...
- *Edmonds Beacon* - EdCC students speak at AAUW conference...