



How to Write an Effective Letter to Editor (LTE) about UNA-USA's UN75 Report

As a member of the United Nations Association of USA (UNA-USA), you have demonstrated interest in standing with the planet's only truly universal institution: the United Nations. There are many ways to advocate on behalf of the UN, and writing a letter to the editor (LTE) is an effective and relatively easy way to reach a large audience of your local or regional newspaper. An LTE is published on the paper's editorial page, which is usually one of the most read sections of the paper.

Why is an LTE an important advocacy tool?

LTEs are an important advocacy tool for UNA-USA because congressional staffers have noted that members of Congress are interested in LTEs as it helps them to know what's on the minds of their constituents and to keep a pulse on local issues. LTEs are also an important way for editors to be educated and/or persuaded about a topic, so that they are more likely to dedicate more space in their newspaper to that particular issue, whether in the editorial page and/or in news articles.

How do you write an LTE?

1. Usually information about how and to whom to submit an LTE can be found on the editorial page, including any specific guidelines for that particular paper. If the information is not listed there, contact the newspaper directly and ask how to go about submitting a letter.
2. Quite often--but not always--an LTE is written in response to another article that's been published in the newspaper. In this case, UNA-USA is providing tips for writing an LTE that may not be in response to a particular article, but rather, is a way to share what Americans think about the current state of the world and the future, and how the UN can support that vision. Some newspapers do occasionally print LTEs that call out a lack of coverage on a specific issue. In this case, you can state your concern that the newspaper hasn't focused or covered this important issue.
3. Your letter should be concise and interesting. The generally accepted standard is that LTEs should be under 200 words, while 150 or less is best. LTEs should focus on one or two main points and ensure that they raise the main point within the first two sentences. It is good practice to include interesting facts and local connections to your main point(s).
4. If you feel it's applicable, you can directly identify a legislator or corporation in your LTE. In most cases, if your letter includes a member of Congress, their staff will probably give them the letter to read. However, if your LTE is printed and you do identify a specific legislator, you can print and send it to them with a cover note to ensure that they see it.
5. You can share your qualifications if they are applicable to the topic you're addressing in the LTE.
6. Be sure to include your contact information including name, address, and daytime phone number when submitting your LTE since most newspapers will contact you before printing your letter.



How to customize your LTE to highlight UN75 findings

Following are ideas for how to write an LTE specifically to connect local citizens in your community with the important findings from the UN75 report, “UN75: American Voices” that UNA-USA compiled from over 80 UN75 consultations.

Below, there’s some background information on the UN75 initiative to provide some context about the report. Next, there are some specific phrases and language to help you start drafting your own LTE.

Remember, the objective of this particular LTE is to use the report’s findings as a compelling case to (1) educate your neighbors about the work of the UN and highlight the direction Americans want for their future; and (2) encourage readers, including your legislator, if you directed your LTE to him/her to take action on a particular issue.

UN75 initiative background:

To mark its 75th anniversary in 2020, the United Nations launched a global conversation on how to tackle the challenges we face and build a better future for all. The UN Secretary-General António Guterres requested all UN member states to conduct dialogues or consultations to understand the needs and wants of their citizens. Three questions guided these conversations with citizens:

- (1) Are we on track to secure a better world?
- (2) What kind of future do we want to create?
- (3) What action is needed to help us achieve a brighter future?

The views, concerns, and ideas generated from each of the UN Member States in response to these questions will be presented to world leaders and senior UN officials at the official commemoration of the 75th Anniversary by the UN General Assembly in September 2020. After September, groups around the world will discuss how best to take forward the priorities and address the important issues.

In the United States, the United Nations Association of the USA (UNA-USA) facilitated more than 80 consultations representing voices from all 50 states, Puerto Rico and Washington, D.C. So far, over 1,800 Americans have participated in these dialogues to express their views and share their opinions about how we can create the world we want. More consultations will be hosted throughout the remainder of 2020, at which time UNA-USA will provide an addendum to its external report to include additional findings.



Use, if possible, and cite these resources, which should serve as the basis of your ask/topic of LTE:

[UNA-USA UN75 "American Voices" Report One Page Overview](#)

[UNA-USA UN75 "American Voices" Full Report](#)

[Regional Findings of UNA-USA UN75 "American Voices" Report](#)

While the following information will be helpful as you develop your thoughts and ideas, it's important to take the time to write the letter in your own words as editors want letters to be original and from a reader.

Take a look at the [UNA-USA UN75 social media toolkit](#) which offers some great short and snappy phrases and examples of wording that you can use to highlight the report. Below are some specific phrases that were informed by the summary of findings from the consultations:

COVID-19 is a stark reminder of the need for cooperation, diplomacy, and collaboration.

- COVID-19 was unsurprisingly mentioned in almost all of the consultations in some manner, but was not necessarily called out in the form of Sustainable Development Goal #3 as the most critical to making progress in the other SDGs. This might be because COVID-19 has implications in ALL 17 SDGs
- *Can you illustrate how COVID-19 has impacted other SDGs in your community?*

UNA-USA was identified as a key stakeholder having a role in shaping the future we want, and also as a liaison between the United Nations and individuals (Americans).

Almost half of UNA-USA consultations reported quality education (SDG#4), reduced inequalities (SDG#10), climate action (SDG#13), and peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG#16 as critical for the future.

- *Are there local instances of any of these issues that you can note?*
- *If your chapter held a consultation, what were some of the key points of discussion or topics of note? Note: You could allude to some of the regional findings that were aggregated based on the 11 UNA-USA regions.*

77% of participants in the UNA-USA consultations predicted a worse world if certain barriers were not addressed (indicated below).

- *Are any of these barriers prevalent in your community? Can you use any of the following to ask your Member of Congress to take action?*
- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Conflict and human rights violations○ Displacement and homelessness○ Growing inequity of access and opportunity○ Health risks and lack of access to healthcare○ Impact of climate change | <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Lack of education equity○ Lack of gender equity○ Lack of leadership○ Lack of trust in and cooperation across governments○ Limited and declining resources○ Poverty, income gaps, job losses |
|--|--|