



Send a Letter-to-the-Editor to Your Local Newspaper(s)

Look at your newspaper's letters page. Scan the page itself, and the newspaper's website letters section, for instructions on word counts and where to send your letter. If you can't find instructions, just count the number of words in a given day's letters. Also, see whether published letters all refer to stories or editorials the newspaper recently ran; some newspapers insist on it, some don't. Then write a letter that reflects what you've learned—length, tone, keyed to a story already published in the newspaper or not, etc.

Be sure your letter says that:

- Afterschool is the key to inspiring students to learn, keeping them safe and helping working families.
- Afterschool programs face severe funding shortfalls that are forcing many to cut back their services to kids and families, and others to close their doors altogether.
- It's important that the federal budget sustain and increase current funding for afterschool programs.

Follow the newspaper's instructions on how to submit the letter, and be sure to include a phone number (not for publication), where the paper can call to confirm that it's actually from you!

You'll find a sample fill-in-the-blanks letter-to-the-editor following this document that's keyed to your trip to Washington, D.C. The Afterschool Alliance urges you to modify the text of the letter, so that if the newspaper asks if the letter is being submitted to other papers around the nation, you can honestly answer that it is unique. Newspapers are increasingly sensitive to that issue.

Sample Letter-to-the-Editor

[May 18], 2011

Letters-to-the-Editor
[Name of newspaper]
[Address]
[City, state, zip]

To the Editor:

Every afternoon in the United States, millions of children leave school with no organized activity or adult supervision awaiting them. Not surprisingly, the afternoon hours are when children are most likely to be the victims of crime and to engage in risky behaviors.

Afterschool programs provide a safe alternative. And that's one of many reasons why we need quality afterschool programs - many more than we already have. Recent research from the Afterschool Alliance, sponsored by jcpenny, reveals that the parents of 18.5 million children not already in afterschool programs say they would sign their kids up if a program were available. Unfortunately, the economy has made it harder for afterschool programs to raise private funds, and local, state, and federal budget cuts are forcing many programs to cut back their programs or close their doors.

Last week I was proud to join hundreds of afterschool supporters in Washington, D.C., at the Afterschool Alliance's *Afterschool for All Challenge*. We met with Members of Congress and their aides to discuss the urgent need to fund afterschool programs. We'll all be better off if lawmakers heed that message.

Sincerely,

[Your name]
[Your program]
[Your phone numbers, not for publication]