...write an op-ed or letter to the editor

First, let’s get clear on the **difference between an op-ed and a letter to the editor**. An op-ed is just like an editorial, but written by a community member. An editorial is the spot in a newspaper where the paper makes its opinions and endorsements public. An op-ed, which stands for “opposite of editorial,” appears on the page facing the editorial page in a print newspaper. A letter to the editor (LTE) is a short statement of your own opinion. These are usually in response to an earlier article or a recent event.

**Writing Tips**

- Be clear about your goal. State it first and use the rest of the piece to develop the idea with supporting facts and stories. Make one point and make it well.

- Come up with a hook. A hook is something that readers will be able to relate to around the time of your story. You could write about girls’ education around Malala Day this summer, or use back-to-school to highlight the millions of children who are out of school around the world. This is your “so what?” for readers to relate to.

- Don’t be afraid to state your opinions clearly — this is not a news story; it’s your opinion. Express it and back it up with facts.

- Acknowledge the other side of the argument and then explain why you disagree.

- Be personal and conversational, or even humorous if the situation allows for it. Convey your passion.

- Appeal to the average reader by using shorter sentences and paragraphs. Avoid clichés.

- Length: Op-eds are usually 750 words or less; LTEs are usually 200 words or less. Check the rules of your chosen news source.

*Are submission guidelines for your paper unclear? Don’t be afraid to give them a call. They tend to differ from paper to paper. Try to develop a relationship with media staff in the same way you develop a relationship with Congressional staff.*

*Lacking inspiration? Discipline yourself. Write an LTE once a week! Once you get the hang of it, you’ll be producing great work.*

Let us know how it went! Email GCE-US at info@gce-us.org