

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 online letters section for instructions on word counts and how to submit 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 programs keep kids safe, inspire them to learn, and help working families.
- Afterschool programs face severe funding shortfalls that are forcing many to cut back their services to kids and families, and forcing others to close their doors altogether.
- In addition, Congress is considering a proposal to reduce federal support for afterschool programs. The proposal would inevitably result in programs being forced to close their doors. 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Follow the newspaper's instructions on how to submit the letter and be sure to include a phone number (not for publication) where the editor can confirm that the submission is actually from you.

You'll find a sample fill-in-the-blanks letter-to-the-editor below that's keyed to this year's *Afterschool for All Challenge*. The Afterschool Alliance urges you to modify the text so that if the newspaper asks if the letter is being submitted to other papers around the nation, you can honestly answer that yours is unique. Newspapers are increasingly sensitive to this issue.

If there is more than one newspaper in your media market, do not submit the same letter to more than one of them. Either choose one outlet for your letter, or submit an entirely different letter from someone else who supports your program to a second outlet.

SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR

[Date]

Letters to the Editor

[Name of newspaper]

[Address]

[City, State, Zip]

To the Editor:

One thing we haven't heard much about so far this campaign season is afterschool programs for kids. That's a shame, because it's a conversation we need to have. Millions of children leave school each weekday afternoon with no adult supervision awaiting them. Not coincidentally, those afternoon hours are when children are most likely to be victims of crime and to engage in risky behaviors.

Afterschool programs provide a safe alternative, which is one of many reasons we need more of them. The parents of *[insert state number: click [here](#), click on your state, scroll down to “Children who would participate if an afterschool program were available” and insert that number here]* children not already in afterschool say they would enroll their kids *if programs were available*. Too often, they are not. Many afterschool programs are struggling to raise funds, and local, state and federal budget reductions are forcing some to cut hours or services or close their doors.

This week I joined thousands of afterschool supporters from around the nation – some in person and some online– in urging our U.S. Senators and representatives in Congress to fund afterschool programs, as part of the Afterschool Alliance’s *Afterschool for All Challenge*. We’ll all be better off if lawmakers heed that message.

Sincerely,

[Your name]

[Your program]

[Your phone numbers, not for publication]