



## 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, 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.
- The President's budget request and proposal for transforming the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers initiative - the principal federal funding stream for afterschool programs - would result in even less money being available for afterschool.

Follow the newspaper's instructions on how to submit the letter, and be sure to include a phone number (not for publication), where the paper can call to confirm that it's actually from you!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

April [22], 2010

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. It's no surprise that the afternoon hours are when they are most likely to be the victims of crime and to engage in risky behaviors.

But there are better alternatives, and afterschool programs provide them. Keeping kids safe in the afternoon is one of many reasons we need quality afterschool programs - many more than we already have. New research from the Afterschool Alliance, sponsored by the JCPenney Afterschool Fund, 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, President Obama's proposed Blueprint for Education Reform would make that harder, by effectively cutting the funding available for afterschool and by federalizing the competition for grant dollars rather than making sure each state gets its fair share.

Last week I was proud to join hundreds of afterschool supporters at the *Afterschool for All Challenge* in Washington D.C., sponsored by the Afterschool Alliance in conjunction with the National AfterSchool Association. We met with Members of Congress and their aides to discuss the urgent need for more funding for afterschool programs. We'll all be better off when lawmakers hear that message.

Sincerely,

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[Your phone numbers, not for publication]