

FairVote

FOR A MORE PERFECT UNION

Write A Letter-to-the Editor

*Thanks for your interest in writing a letter-to-the-editor to support better elections.
We hope you'll find everything you need below to craft and submit your letter.
Thanks again! We're so happy you're part of our team.*

--FairVote

Learn the submission requirements for the publication where you'd like to submit:

- What is the word count limit for letters to the editor? These are usually very short, anywhere from 150 to 350 words.
- Is there a submission deadline to keep in mind (e.g. for weekly papers)?
- How do I submit the letter through the appropriate channel? There could be a specific email address or a submission form.

Tips for writing letters with the best chance of being published:

- Keep your letter short, and within the word count requirement.
- There is no need to be formal, use a conversational tone.
- Submit your letter to one publication. Publishers want unique content.
- Think about a local and personal touch: what will make the reader relate to you? For example, you can talk about a recent local election you voted in and how the current voting system affected it.
- Make it interesting! If it bores you, it will bore the paper.
- LTEs are meant to be reactions to a specific article or column. Send letters quickly—the same day, if possible. Publications like to keep things current.
- Focus on the facts, not the messenger. Letters to the editor that whine about bias in coverage are usually useless unless backed up by provable facts demonstrating significant errors on the part of the publication.
- Try to make the letter self-contained. Readers may not be familiar with the piece that generated the letter. Include at least one line that explains the previous article your letter is referring to.
- Keep with it: a newspaper won't necessarily accept your first submission. That's okay—we're playing the long game. Newspapers are more likely to editorialize on an issue after they receive lots of LTEs about it, and most people write a few LTEs before they see one in the newspaper.

Suggestions for angles and talking points:

We strongly encourage you to put these sample messages into your own words.

Content that if published in a column or article can serve as a good hook for your letter:

- Independent, third party, or unpopular candidates risk splitting the vote; or people deciding not to run for fear of splitting the vote
- Ranked choice voting election results from other places
- Crowded primaries
- Mudslinging campaigning tactics
- Lack of choices for voters
- Low turnout in primary or runoff elections
- Election winners without majority support from the community
- Elected officials that do not match the diversity of the electorate

Sample Messages that describe the problems:

- Mudslinging is a pro sport in our politics. Increased polarization and valuing party loyalty over that of the common good has led to toxic campaign messages. These divide us still further and even suppress voter turnout. We have so few choices on the ballot. There have to be more people with innovative ideas for our community than just two individuals.
- I don't want to have to figure out which candidate is most likely to win. I want to express my actual preferences without feeling like I'm wasting my vote on a candidate who may not be able to win.
- Low turnout elections are bad for our community, resulting in outcomes that may not reflect the wishes of most of us. Low turnout is common in runoff, preliminary, primary, or special elections. And our tax dollars are paying for them.
- Candidates are regularly elected without the support of the majority of the community. When many candidates run at the same time, the winner doesn't need a majority, thanks to split electorates and divisive campaigns. Ranked choice voting ensures that candidates win with 51% or more of the public's support
- Millions of early voters have wasted their votes on candidates who dropped out of the race since they submitted their ballot.
- If our presidential elections are so fragile that a third party candidate can throw the entire system into disarray, the problem isn't with the candidate, it's with our elections.

Solutions messages:

- Ranked choice voting is the simple act of ranking your candidates in order of preference, rather than just selecting one.

- Ranked choice voting ensures that voters in a primary election decide who the most viable candidate is for the general election.
- Candidates must build consensus to win, discouraging negative campaigning. It ensures whoever wins the primary election is listening to all voices and is the most capable of winning the general election.
- Ranked choice voting promotes the voices of underrepresented voters and rewards candidates that appeal to and unify a diverse party base.
- Ranked choice voting allows third party voters to sincerely rank their preferred candidate first without feeling like their votes are wasted.
- Major parties don't need to fear more competition: Elections are about competing ideas, and it is the debate of ideas and policies that make our country strong.
- Ranked choice voting is already being used statewide in Maine, and in local elections in New York City and other cities across the country. Many state parties are adopting it for presidential primaries, including this year's Democratic primaries in Kansas, Wyoming, Alaska, and Hawaii.

Core messages to wrap up a persuasive argument:

- Our current voting system fails voters whenever there are more than two candidates. Ranked choice voting is a simple solution that makes democracy more fair and functional and can significantly benefit voters.
- In primaries, ranked choice voting ensures that voters get to decide who is the most viable candidate. It requires candidates to build consensus in order to win, ensuring whoever emerges from the primaries has the broadest support, and as a result, is the one most capable of winning the general election.
- By ranking candidates in order of choice, we can vote for our favorite candidate without helping to elect the candidate we like the least.
- It allows political parties to put the best candidate forward. Both the Democratic and Republican parties would be more unified if they were to use ranked choice voting.
- Americans deserve to vote for the candidates they really want, not just who they think other voters are voting for.
- All 50 states should follow Alaska, Hawaii, Kansas, and Wyoming's lead in 2024 by adopting ranked choice voting as part of their primary process.
- At the community level, we can start to make this happen by advocating for it in our local and state election processes.
- Both major political parties need to reform their current primary system and use ranked choice voting to resolve the dysfunction many voters face when they cast their ballots.
- Everyone should be able to vote for the candidate they want without fear of spoiling an election or splitting the vote. Ranked choice voting makes that simple for voters.
- More voices and perspectives in an election cycle should be a good thing, not a threat to our democracy and our republic. We all benefit when there's a diversity of candidates and perspectives in a race.

Step-by-step guide to crafting a letter-to-the-editor

Optional

Step 1 Identify your local angle or problem and/or specific article or column you're writing about

"I am writing in response to the article titled ____ published on _____. It is true that (something from the article). It is also true that (key problem you've identified; sample problem messages are above)."

Step 2 Elaborate on the problem

What does the problem you've identified mean for the average resident where you live?

Step 3 Describe your solution

"Ranked choice voting is the simple act of ranking your candidates in order of preference, rather than just selecting one."

Step 4 Answer why you support this solution

"Ranked choice voting is showing real results and promise in communities that are using it. I want our own community to have leadership that more closely aligns with the electorate."

Step 5 Inspire and inform to get involved

"Our country and our community are ready for reforms that will improve our democratic institutions. We're seeing this play out all over the country. It's time for [changemaker] to join the movement to make ranked choice voting a reality."