

Orleans County Democratic Committee

“Getting Our Message Out”

Introduction

Ever wonder why there are so many letters to the editor in our area papers that seem diametrically opposed to the things we stand for as Democrats? It’s because the “other side” does a great job of motivating their constituency to write those letters. Rather than whine and wail, we need to develop a concerted response to match that output of letters with our own.

It helps to get letters from rural areas into the big city daily papers, but we also need letters sent to the smaller dailies and weeklies. It’s harder to get a letter in Buffalo News or Rochester Democrat & Chronicle, but the readership is larger. It’s easier to get a letter into one of the local print or electronic papers, but the readership is smaller. The smaller papers may give your letter a little more space than the bigger papers.

The best letters are concise, related to a current news issue, or convey a personal experience relating to a current new issue. Letters to the Editor should be double-spaced. Include your name, address, and phone number. We also suggest a reference to your town or to Orleans County when you write. We need to break through the mistaken mindset that the only people who live in our area are conservative Republicans!

See the Appendix at the end of this document for more tips on writing letters to the editor.

Newspapers

Each listed media outlet gives a general web address, and in most cases a direct e-mail address for submission of letters. Most newspapers limit submissions to one letter per month. Most newspapers will not print letters that have been submitted to other publications. Editors usually respond to letter writers with a phone call to verify your identity, so be sure to include your telephone number. We no longer have a daily newspaper in Orleans County, but you can submit letters to publications in adjacent counties as they have many readers in Orleans.

Democrat & Chronicle (www.democratandchronicle.com)

55 Exchange Blvd., Rochester NY 14614-2001

From D& C website: All submissions must include your name, address and daytime telephone number. Limit letters to **150** words. Letters to the editor, opinion and editorial columns, and articles submitted to the Democrat and Chronicle may be distributed in print, electronic and other forms. **Address:** Letters to the Editor, Democrat and Chronicle, 55 Exchange Blvd., Rochester, NY 14614. Or, email us at dcreditpage@democratandchronicle.com. **Letters to the editor:** Pieces of **150** or fewer words, considered for publication on daily pages. **Speaking Out:** Please limit Speaking Out essay submissions

to 450 or fewer words. For questions about essays, call (585) 258-2434. **Thumbs up, down:** Considered for publication in the "Thumbs up, down" column published on Saturdays. All letters and essays chosen for publication are subject to editing for length, clarity and accuracy.

The Buffalo News (www.buffalonews.com)

One News Plaza, P.O. Box 100, Buffalo NY 14240

From the Buffalo News web site:

WRITER GUIDELINES FOR THE NEWS OPINION PAGES

The major outlets for freelance "op-ed" material in The News are the My View column and the Another Voice column on the editorial page. Longer articles will be considered for the Sunday Viewpoints section if they are substantial and appropriate to the setting, but writers should query John Neville or Carol Feind at The News before undertaking any long article.

MY VIEW: This is a first-person column open to all Western New York writers. Submissions should be 600 words. The writer should include some personal narrative (story-telling) along with the expository argument he or she is presenting. My View acquires its popularity with readers from writers' willingness to reveal something of themselves and their lives (not merely what they think, but what they do and are) adding a human dimension. Simply giving your opinion on an issue is not acceptable. The News relies on its syndicated columnists for that. A My View should make one strong major point and then develop it. It should have a theme that could be summarized in a single, complete sentence. Do not submit "how to" or advice articles. Please include address, telephone number, and a brief author I.D. with all submissions. Writers may appear no more than three times a year. There is no payment for this column.

ANOTHER VOICE: This is an issues-oriented column. Submissions should be 460 words. The author should have some background or expertise on the subject. There is no payment for this column.

The News retains publication and republication rights and requires first regional use. Writers are free to resell the articles later to other publications. If an article being submitted to The News has already been printed anywhere else, nationally or locally, the writer must disclose this at the time of submission.

Submission to My View and Another Voice must be emailed to editpage@buffnews.com

GUIDELINES FOR EVERYBODY'S COLUMN / LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters should be a maximum of 250 words. Letters must be written to the editors of the News. They should not be copies of letters to someone else or "open letters" to a third party. The letter should not reply to an earlier letter that was itself a reply to another writer. A writer or household may be represented in the column only once in 30 days. Letters must be submitted with the writer's full name. The writer's name must be published, rather than a pseudonym. The writer must include his or her street address and telephone number, though only the town of residence will be published. Letters should be from writers within The News circulation area or, if from outside, commenting on issues particular to this area. Letters must convey an opinion. The column is not a community bulletin board to be used for announcements of events, or other primarily informational items. The column does not print thank you letters. The column does not print poetry. Letters critical of the operating policies of local broadcast-news organizations should be sent to those organizations rather than The News.

No straight endorsements of candidates will be printed, though letters discussing candidates' specific performance or positions on issues may be used. Letters written as school projects cannot be printed. Letters must be fact-checked. If the editors cannot verify that the material presented as fact in the letter is accurate, the letter cannot be printed. The News reserves the right to edit all letters. Send letters to Everybody's Column, The Buffalo News, P.O. Box 100, Buffalo, NY 14240 or e-mail to LetterToEditor@buffnews.com

Letters to the Editor

Greece Post (www.greecepost.com)

73 Buffalo Street, Canandaigua, NY 14424

Send Letters to: yournews@messengerpostmedia.com

Note: the Greece paper is published by a newspaper company in Canandaigua

Letters to the Editor

The Daily News (<http://thedailynewsonline.com/>)

2 Apollo Drive, Batavia, NY 14020

(585) 343-8000

Send Letters to: news@batavianews.com

Note: The Daily News serves Genesee, Orleans and Wyoming Counties.

Letters to the Editor

Lockport Union-Sun & Journal (<http://lockportjournal.com/>)

170 East Ave.

Lockport, NY 14094

Main Phone: (716) 439-9222

Newsroom Fax: (716) 439-9239

Letters to the Editor: https://www.lockportjournal.com/site/forms/online_services/letter/

Westside News

Suburban News or Hamlin Clarkson Herald (<http://www.westsidenewsonline.com/>)

1835 North Union Street

Spencerport NY 14559

585-352-3411

Policies and standards for submissions to *Your Voice*: Submissions to *Your Voice*, are intended to foster an open discussion of differing viewpoints. Those who offer submissions to *Your Voice* agree to comply with all rules associated with the participation in *Your Voice*, as listed below. Non-compliant participants in *Your Voice* may expect their submissions to be redacted or simply not posted without warning.

Participants agree that Westside News Inc. may modify, retransmit or delete any submission at its discretion, and that submissions or portions of submissions may be republished by Westside News Inc..

Submissions that exhibit any of the following will not be published. Language which is profane, vulgar, in poor taste, unintelligible, threatening or which incites violence. Racial, ethnic or gender slurs.

Name-calling. Potentially libelous statements about any person or organization. Naming a private individual in anything but a positive, truthful way. A private individual is anyone not on the public/taxpayer payroll nor actively involved in the public arena – i.e., a “public figure.”

Submissions which include an improper or derogatory spelling of a person’s name, including names of public officials. Submissions about landlords, former employers or experiences with specific businesses.

Submissions typed in all capital letters. Anything meant to promote or advertise a business.

Note: Westside News serves the eastern portion of Orleans County, along with Monroe County and parts of Genesee County.

Letters to the Editor

City Newspaper (www.rochestercitynewspaper.com)

250 North Goodman Street, Rochester, NY14607

themail@rochester-citynews.com

City Newspaper is an alternative weekly in Rochester, but will print letters from rural counties.

On-line

Most of the newspapers listed above also have web sites that allow readers to post their comments on letters to the editor or basic news stories. You can easily read news and comments by others, but to post your own news or comments (blogging) you must register for access. In some cases you must use your real name, but in other cases you can use an anonymous screen name (although your name will be known by the editorial staff). These comments sections are often lightly moderated, meaning that unintelligent raving, name-calling, and even obscenities may appear. You may need to wear your thick skin if you enter this world of blogging. The word "Blog", by the way, is derived from "web-log", a series of comments on a particular topic.

In addition to local newspapers, take a look at these other useful web sites. These have late-breaking news, and lots of opportunities for comments.

GLOW Democrats (Facebook "GLOW Democrats") This is a clearinghouse of the latest news of interest to Democrats in Genesee, Livingston, Orleans and Wyoming Counties. You can find helpful links to local, state and national news stories. Quite simply, if you're a Democrat in Orleans County you need be interacting with this web site, because, in fact, it is us!

Orleans County Progressives (Facebook "Orleans County Progressives") "This group exists to allow Orleans County NY citizens a virtual gathering place where we can share information and connect as we move toward a more progressive county. In solidarity, peace, and the pursuit of justice for all, we come together."

The Orleans Hub (www.orleanshub.com) A news-oriented web page for Orleans County, not related to a print publication. Letters to the Editor are welcomed, but there is no provision for reader comments. In the absence of any print publications in Orleans County the Orleans Hub has become a primary news source.

The Batavian (www.thebatavian.com) It covers Batavia, Genesee County, and also Orleans and Wyoming news. The Batavian purports to be non-partisan. However, conservative/libertarian commentary can dominate at times. Hundreds of people view The Batavian every day, judging by the number of votes on occasional daily opinion polls that are included there. More than a few elected officials and party activists participate regularly.

Facebook Your own Facebook page can be a good way to keep your network of friends informed about the issues you care about.

Direct

It is always a good idea to send your personal letters directly to elected officials. To communicate with them it helps to be aware of modern electronic communication technologies. You can communicate through the US mail or telephone, but the increasingly popular method is by e-mail, or even Facebook, twitter, and texting. The contact address and numbers can be found easily on each elected official's web-site, or in the local telephone book. In most cases the official's web-site has a direct e-mail link that you can use. Lately, when you communicate through an official's web-page you are invited to receive on-going communications from that official. This is not a bad thing, because when they send things out, you can respond immediately. In order to avoid gumming up your e-mail account with dozens of political communications many people set up an alternate e-address for this purpose.

We have always heard that personal hand-written letters sent through the US mail are the best, as they demonstrate so clearly that the letter is coming from an average citizen. However, letters sent through the US mail to Washington may be delayed up to several weeks due to scanning that is now required because of the anthrax scare of some years ago. Senators and Congressional representatives have district offices, and you can send your letters there, too.

You can write a lengthy, logical and persuasive letter to these people, but keep in mind that the staffers and interns are mostly tallying the day's communications as "For" or "Against" a given issue. To make your letter stand out it is a good strategy to ask a question that they will have to take time to answer. For example, "How many people will lose health care insurance coverage in the 27th District if the Affordable Care Act is repealed?" They love to help people fix the "potholes" in their neighborhood by intervening on your behalf with other public agencies, but try to connect your pothole with a larger issue. For example: "The VA denied me the surgery I need. How can I expect effective advocacy about this from you, Congressman, when you are on record calling for federal programs like the VA to be cut?"

If in your letter you identify yourself as a community leader of any kind – member of a town committee, church officer, or scout volunteer, you improve your chances of getting a response – the staffer calculates that you are a "mover and shaker" likely to talk to others about your concern.

In the present time, getting an actual written response from one of these legislators is becoming rarer. A rule of thumb seems to be that e-messages rarely get a response other than "thank you for expressing your opinion", while letters sent through the mail have a better chance of getting a more expansive answer. Sometimes written responses from legislators can take as long as six or nine months to reach you, and the content may be the same as the response you received a year earlier!

So, you don't have the time to write a long letter with twenty cogent arguments to support your position? It is OK to send a simple message, as short as "I support the Affordable

Care Act, and urge you to do so, too”, because this does become part of the daily tally. This sort of simple message is especially appropriate for calling a legislator on the phone. They really don’t have a lot of time to chat with you.

A number of organizations send out sample letters for you to use in composing your own message. When staffers see the same letter appearing in large quantities they tend to discount them as something “orchestrated” by a group outside of the district. So make your message as unique as you can. Sometimes it can have an impact when you identify yourself as a member of a local organization with a particular stake in an issue.

It goes without saying that petitions, on-line or otherwise, have very little impact. Senders feel like they have communicated an important sentiment, but recipients tend to undervalue the message because so little effort was put into it.

Because elected officials get swamped by thousands of e-mail messages, they have instituted a protocol requiring you to supply your zip code. This is their way of telling you that they are only interested in e-mail from constituents. You can send messages to elected officials outside of your district, but your message will not be taken very seriously. However, it is always OK to write to officials in leadership positions (Senate Majority Leader and Speaker of the House are examples of this), even if you are not in their district.

UPDATED: March 5, 2017