

TIPS ON EFFECTIVE LETTERS TO THE EDITOR








WHAT IS A LETTER TO THE EDITOR?

A letter to the editor is a short opinion piece (often around 200 words) taking a strong position on a current issue – like Impact Aid – or on a previously published article.

WHY WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR?

A letter to the editor is an important advocacy tool. Congressional offices pay close attention to letters to the editor, as they provide insight into the priorities of their constituents. Letters to the editor are also a publication's way of getting feedback from its audience. While they do not publish every letter, editors are influenced by the volume of correspondence they receive on a topic. Submitting a letter signals that Impact Aid is an important issue in the community and increases the odds of the publication covering it in the future even if the letter is not published.

TIPS ON WRITING A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

-  **Relate the letter to a current event** (for example, the letter might begin, "I was disappointed that the House budget proposal last week..." or a policymaker's actions (for example, "I was pleased to see that Senator XYZ signed a letter in support of Impact Aid that..."))
-  **Include local information** important to the readership of the publication (for example, how your school district and students benefit from Impact Aid or what the impact of cutting or eliminating the funding would be)
-  **Mention your Members of Congress** (if possible and relevant)
-  **Focus on one point** – don't try to address every aspect of Impact Aid policy in one letter
-  **Keep the letter short and high-level**, using easy-to-understand language – do not use technical language or policy jargon
-  **End with a call to action** for either community members (for example, "Join me in calling on Congress to increase Impact Aid funding") or policymakers (for example, "I urge Representative XYZ to support Impact Aid by...")
-  **Always be respectful**

TIPS ON SUBMITTING A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

- Follow the submission rules of the publication to which you are submitting
- Provide contact information, such as an email address and phone number, so the publication can authenticate the letter if they choose to run it
- Don't submit a letter to an outlet that just ran another of your letters
- If not clear in the letter, include information that highlights your expertise on Impact Aid and your school district in your cover email
- Don't submit the same or similar letters to multiple outlets in the same media market
- If your letter runs, send a copy to your legislator, and keep copies for future Hill visits
- If your letter runs, send a copy to NAFIS

NEED INSPIRATION? Check out the NAFIS Template Letter to the Editor.

TEMPLATE LETTER TO THE EDITOR

ADVOCATE FOR INCREASED IMPACT AID FUNDING

To support your Impact Aid advocacy and raise awareness about the importance of the Impact Aid program, NAFIS has developed a template letter to the editor. Where there is red text, please insert your own or updated information. You can also make changes and add language to emphasize how the program is most important to your context.

Dear Editor,

As Congress debates FY 20XX federal education funding, **Senator ABC, Senator XYZ and Representative LMN** should lead the charge in advocating for increased funding for Impact Aid.

Impact Aid supports school districts like **[insert your school district name]**, which contain federally owned property like **[insert the name of your federal lands]**. We are proud to have these lands in our community. But they can't be taxed, so our district is disadvantaged compared to those without federal property when it comes to funding schools. Impact Aid offsets the lost tax revenue.

Impact Aid plays a critical role in our district. It helps us pay for teachers' salaries, education technology, social emotional supports and much, much more. Like local tax dollars, Impact Aid is flexible – we decide how to spend it.

But Impact Aid is underfunded – and it has been for decades. That means our district does not receive all the funds that we deserve.

It's time for Congress to step up and give us the resources we need, so we can provide the opportunity for our students to reach their full potential.

Sincerely,

[Your Name and Contact Information]