



Rhode Island Tobacco Control Network

Media Advocacy

Tips for Writing an Op-Ed (Opinion-Editorial)

Op-Eds are issue opinion pieces written by local readers, usually appearing opposite the editorial page. Decision-makers check out the opinion pages of the newspaper for a quick snapshot of what people care about at any given time. Op-Eds are an important tool for advocates, and the arts and design sectors should use them regularly to communicate directly with decision-makers through the media outlets that matter to those decision-makers.

- Because a newspaper usually won't run multiple op-eds on the same subject, give careful thought to whom you want to have author your op-ed. Many papers will allow two authors, and your messengers are often as important as your message. For example, op-eds that are trying to make a case for the arts and design sectors as a driving force in Rhode Island's economy might attract more attention if co-authored by someone from the arts community and a business person outside of the arts and design sectors. Think about clout, relevance to the issue, and a mix of perspectives.
- Identify the correct person to whom to send your op-ed, usually the editorial page editor.
- Include your name, address and daytime telephone number — include title if pertinent.
- Include all relevant information about the issue, including background information.
- Be aware that your piece is subject to editing by newspaper.
- Op-Eds should generally be 600 words or less, but check with the specific newspaper for their policy.
- Op-Eds are usually published in a timely manner, as most are related to a current event issue, i.e. something that has just happened and/or an issue that has recently been covered by the newspaper. It is essential to move quickly to write, edit, and submit op-eds.
- Please send us a copy of your final op-ed for our records!