



AVV's How Get Your Op-Ed Published

How to Write an Op-Ed for your local paper

As a Veteran or Mission Partner, you have an important voice and perspective that needs to be shared. We find that each of us has something to say, but the hardest part is just starting. It's like PT; I just have to put my shoes on and get out the door and then everything will be fine and I'll be glad I exercised.

So here is the short, down and dirty to get you started and your Op-Ed published.

1. Tell Your Story. As Veterans, we not only have unique experiences that others find interesting, but we also have unique training and perspectives on conditions in our community, state and world. When searching for a topic, focus on something you are passionate in and is withing your experience. It's also best to write about topics that are aligned with your training. Anything regarding the military, or in an area of your expertise is fair game. Also, write about anything community related that is current and the topic of discussions.

2. Start Typing. You are likely going to submit your Op-Ed by email so you'll be typing it on the computer. Best to draft it in MS Word or another word processor. That allows you to edit and get comments from others before you send. Typically, newspapers ask that Op-Eds are kept short; 500-800 words. A good approach is to craft a rough outline:

- Topic sentence or key point;
- your position on the topic,
- a few supporting facts,
- any counter arguments to your topic (which you then counter),
- a call to action,
- then a close

3. Read and Reread. Once you've got your thoughts on paper (or in the computer), read your Op-Ed out loud. If it sounds good to the ear, then it sounds good to be read. Ask friends and family to proof read your Op-Ed. It's important to not take their comments personally. The goal is to get the hardest-hitting Op-Ed in the fewest number of words. That takes lots of editing. You may also want to add another person's name to the Op-Ed as it shows there is others who share your opinion and willing to put their name to it.

4. Package and Submit. Once your Op-Ed reads the way you want it, next find the news outlet in which you would like it to be run. It's important to package the Op-Ed into their format then submit it for review and possible publication. This is not a "fire and forget" task. You'll want to follow their instructions very closely and be very precise in how the Op-Ed is sent. This is normally done by email, but some papers still receive paper Op-Eds. Also, be aware that most papers won't publish an Op-Ed that has been published in another source, so make sure you send your Op-Ed to one paper at a time and know if they will publish it before sending to another outlet. Here are a list of newspaper and the size of circulation (both paper and digital version) in Virginia. Note that some links at the bottom to outlets may not work. Just google them: <https://www.officialusa.com/stateguides/media/newspapers/virginia.html>



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5. Follow-Up and Share. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, you will need to follow-up with the newspaper to confirm that they received your Op-Ed and if they are interested. Recognize that for every 10 Op-Eds published a paper may receive 100 submissions. That doesn't necessarily mean that those 10 published were the best, but that they had relevant for their readers, could be edited by the paper to fit their available space, and someone (you!) followed-up and showed interest in it being published. Once your Op-Ed is published—and it will be if you follow these steps and are persistent—then share your article with your friends, family and neighbors. It means that your Op-Ed is important to your community and the newspaper's readership.

We at American Veterans Vote, Inc. believe Veterans, Family Members and those who support our military have an important perspective and our voice needs to be shared. No one is going to make us share our opinions, they may not even ask us. It is our responsibility as Veterans to stay involved and to provide our best input based on our experiences, training and beliefs.

Now go write your Op-Ed!

Questions or comments sent to info@americanveteransvote.com