

**What is a Letter to the Editor?**

There is a lot of misinformation circulating in the media about federal employees, and we have an obligation to defend the service we provide for our fellow Americans. Letters to the editor are brief letters that readers write to contribute their two cents on a particular newspaper article. Newspapers often publish these letters in the following day's news, giving readers the opportunity to see other readers' perspectives on the news.

**How do I Submit a Letter to the Editor?**

Every newspaper has its own system and guidelines for submitting letters to the editor, but most follow the same general principles. Letters to the editor are usually between 100 and 250 words long, current, and exclusive to the chosen newspaper. Include a brief bio, along with your phone number, email address, and mailing address at the bottom, as the newspaper will call to confirm that you are the author. Be sure to check your local newspaper guidelines before submitting. Submission details and requirements will almost certainly be posted on their website.

**Tips for Writing a Letter to the Editor:**

- Pick a topic that you feel passionate about. Relate it to an issue very recently discussed in the publication to which you are writing.
- Think of new ways to discuss the topic and present unique solutions to the problem.
- Use no more than four short paragraphs with 2-3 sentences each.
- Include your major points within the first two paragraphs.
- Avoid too much emotion—no ranting, raving or sarcastic remarks about the opposing side of an issue. No clichés or puns please.
- If you respond to another letter or column, don't attack the author. Instead offer your opinion and try to promote a debate that encourages other reader letters.
- If you're responding to a recent news article, previous letter editorial or news event, reference it by a date and headline.
- Don't be disappointed if your letter doesn't get published. Newspapers get lots of letters daily.

**Sample Letters to the Editor:**

To the Editor:

The July 24 raise in the federal minimum wage to \$7.25 per hour, the last of three such increases enacted by Congress in 2007, will help millions of workers cope with the rising price of food, housing, and other basic items. The extra earnings of up to \$28 per week could help pay for health care or school supplies, but it won't get many people out of poverty.

In this time of economic turmoil, the increase in the minimum wage is part of the solution, not the problem, since the extra weekly pay of up to \$28 for low-income workers will be spent at neighborhood businesses on basic needs like food, housing, and health care.

Numerous studies cited by Let Justice Roll, a nonpartisan coalition of faith, labor, and business organizations, demonstrate clearly that increasing the minimum wage is sound business practice and provides a stimulus to local economies.

Let's keep things in perspective: even with the increase, the purchasing power of the minimum wage will still be lower than when Eisenhower was president. And the new income floor of \$15,080 a year is less than what a corporate CEO at a Standard & Poor's 500 company earns before lunch-time on any given day.

Your name

Your address

Daytime telephone number

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**Dougan: Just Job Cuts Won't Work**

The June 30 Guest Observer by Rep. Dennis Ross (R-Fla.) to justify cutting more than 200,000 federal jobs during one of our nation's biggest economic slumps begs for a more deliberate analysis.

His assertion that a 10 percent reduction in the federal workforce will result in a "smarter and leaner" public workforce is simply wrong.

Any proposals designed to reduce the number of federal workers without a corresponding reduction in federal agency mandates will only increase the number of contract employees that agencies will be forced to use to pick up the workload. While not technically federal employees, taxpayers pay for contract employee salaries the same as civilian federal workers, yet contractors cost taxpayers more in most cases.

If Ross is serious about truly reducing the size of government, he and others in Congress should lead a genuine conversation with the American people about what specific programs should be reshaped or scaled back. While this effort may be more difficult politically, it is the only genuine way to reduce the size of the government.

After all, you can't measure the size of government by the number of employees — you measure in dollars and cents.

— William R. Dougan, national president of the National Federation of Federal Employees