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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

**Letters to the editor** are generally short pieces, of about 250 words or less, that are in direct response to something recently published in the paper.

You should closely monitor the news in your paper and look for opportunities to respond to an article connected to the census. You should send your letter to the editor as soon as possible after the story you are responding is published - preferably the same day.

Prepare in advance for this quick response by drafting key points you want included in your piece. This will allow you to write your follow-up letter in a timely manner. See an example and a quick guide to writing a Letter to the Editor.

**Op-eds** are slightly longer than letters to the editor; generally they run about 750 words or less. Op-eds do not need to be in response to a specific article in the paper. You can draft and submit an op-ed at anytime, but as we are building awareness of the census from January through March, are priority months to get information to the public.

### How to write a Letter to the Editor

#### Step 1: Choose a topic

The broader topic will be the Census. Choose a more specific topic, such as the Census and federal school loans.

#### Step 2: Tell the Story

Did you or a relative receive a grant or a federal loan to go to a college they otherwise might not have been able to afford? If you make it a personal story, it will likely resonate with readers.

#### Step 3: The message

"Because of these reasons and more, I am committed to not only completing the 2020 Census, but also to help get the word out to my friends and neighbors."

#### Step 4: Submit

Send the letter in to your local papers, but also the neighborhood papers. If you need assistance on where or how to send your letter to the press, contact us at [Census2020@sos.nj.gov](mailto:Census2020@sos.nj.gov)

#### Step 5: Let Us Know

We will look for it in the paper and share it with our community!

**\*Note** - Most news sites have an electronic submittal tool for LTEs

## Sample Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor -

The 2020 Census has been in the news a lot lately. Many people are unaware of the magnitude of the census and how the data collected affects each of us. For example, the free school lunch program is one of the many critical public programs funded by the federal government. My family lives on a very tight budget and my children rely on school lunches. A cut to this program could result in less meals or lower quality meals for my children and I know that I cannot afford to make up the difference.

This funding is dependent on the population, which is determined every ten years by the census. The slightest undercount would result the loss of major funding for critical services in New Jersey (or your hometown).

I am grateful for the opportunity to write about the census funding for school lunches. Thank you to everyone helping to promote the 2020 Census in New Jersey (or your hometown).

Sincerely,

[Me]