

THREE QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE SUBMITTING A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

- Is my letter as brief as possible? (less than 200 words, better yet, less than 100 words?)
- Is my point clear?
- Is my letter timely and relevant to an article just printed?

EXAMPLES OF LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

How does the issue affect our everyday lives?

Doesn't Add Up (San Francisco Chronicle, March 18, 2008)

Can someone please explain to me why our teachers are getting pink slips and San Quentin gets a new death chamber? Our death penalty system costs taxpayers more than \$114 million a year beyond the cost of simply keeping the convicts locked up for life.

Use metaphors and similes that are easy to understand and relatable

Throw of the yoke (San Francisco Chronicle, November 21, 2007)

Re "Top state courts' ideo on Death Row appeals," (Nov. 20): Has it occurred to anyone that every Western democracy has rid themselves of the death penalty because there is no way to make it work fairly, economically, and efficiently? Instead of a ballot initiative to amend the CA state constitution, as the CA Supreme Court has proposed, and infusing more taxpayer money into the exorbitantly expensive death penalty machine, why don't we join the rest of the evolved world and free ourselves of this costly yoke of trying to make it work?

Share personal stories of learning, change, and grassroots involvement.

(Tennessean) After reading Bob Clement's story about former Governor Frank Clement's struggle with the death penalty, I have to ask why a Governor would make such a politically risky move as commuting all death sentences to life? The answer is not complicated. It was the right thing to do. As the Governor knew, the system is fraught with uncertainty and injustice. Certainly there are guilty people on death row, but there are also the innocent. If an innocent person is put to death, we are responsible. Knowing the flaws in the system as I do after practicing law for 26 years, I do not want that responsibility. It is time to repeal the death penalty and seek alternatives such as life imprisonment without parole.

Offer practical solutions

Treat Tennesseans with Mental Illness; Don't Execute Them (Tennessean, October 2011)

I was troubled by the statistics provided by Judge Daniel Eisenstein in Sunday's *Tennessee Voices* on the rising numbers of those with mental illness in the court system. He also noted that over the past few years, those with severe mental illness were removed from TennCare coverage and that in 2009, the number of inpatient beds at all Tennessee Mental Health Institutes decreased by 19%. At the same time, the state will spend millions of dollars to execute these individuals if, during a psychotic episode, they commit a violent crime. Wouldn't our resources be better spent treating those with severe mental illness before a crime is committed instead of executing them once a life has already been lost?

Tennesseans for Alternatives to the Death Penalty (TADP)

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