



MPP's Guide to Writing Letters to the Editor for Medical Cannabis in Nebraska

What: Letters to the editor (LTEs) are short, succinct pieces — typically 150-300 words — crafted by community members that appear in the opinion pages of newspapers and other publications. While the editorial staff selects which LTEs appear in their publications, it is helpful to think of your audience as much larger, addressing all members of the community including elected officials. LTEs give the writer a platform to share his or her thoughts on an issue of importance. The more personal an LTE, the more persuasive the voice will carry across the page, and the more likely it is to be selected for publication.

Where: Submit letters to a nearby local or a statewide newspaper. Some of these papers' websites have a submission form link under "submission forms" at the bottom of the home page; others can be found via "contact us." Some possibilities for where to submit letters include:

Columbus Telegram • Fremont Tribune • Gothenburg Times • Heartland Messenger • Holt County Independent • Lexington Clipper-Herald • Lincoln Journal Star • McCook Daily Gazette • Nebraska City News-Press • Norfolk Daily News • North Platte Telegraph • Omaha World-Herald • Seward County Independent • York News-Times

When: Although some local newspapers may publish LTEs about medical cannabis at any time, an LTE may be more likely to be printed if it references a recent story written on the topic.

Possible talking points: Consider including one or more of the following points in your letter, ideally after reworking it to be in your own voice. Do not try to include too many different points in a single letter.

If you or a loved one is a patient who could benefit from medical cannabis, we recommend focusing on your personal story and need for this law. If other medicines haven't worked or have resulted in devastating side effects, you may want to explain that.

- The Nebraska Legislature and governor should show compassion for suffering patients by approving medical cannabis legislation this year.
- Patients and their doctors should be trusted to decide if medical cannabis is an appropriate treatment, just as they are allowed to do for far more dangerous drugs, such as opiates.
- Several states, including Connecticut, Minnesota, and Vermont, have shown that they can create well-regulated medical cannabis programs without creating problems.
- Studies show that many patients suffering from cancer, multiple sclerosis, epilepsy, HIV/AIDS, Crohn's disease, and severe pain find relief from cannabis.
- Fifty-five percent of Americans live in one of the 25 states that allow the doctor-advised, medical use of cannabis. Nebraska patients and doctors deserve the same medical freedom.
- Several health, medical, and religious organizations support allowing medical cannabis, such as the American Nurses Association, the American Public Health Association, the American Academy of HIV Medicine, the Epilepsy Foundation, the Presbyterian Church (USA), and the United Methodist Church.

Need help? If you have a personal connection to the issue and you need help crafting an LTE, let us know by emailing state@mpp.org. Be sure to mention that you're from Nebraska.

Example LTE:

Medical cannabis a real need

The 2016 legislative session is in full swing now in our Unicameral, and I would like to highlight a bill that will help our most vulnerable Nebraska citizens, LB643, The Cannabis Compassion and Care Act. This bill would allow legal and safe access to medical cannabis for anyone suffering from one of nine specified diseases such as cancer, ALS, Crohn's, epilepsy, multiple sclerosis, etc., as recommended by a physician and registered through the Department of Health and Human Services.

Those who oppose this bill are unfortunately confusing medical cannabis with recreational cannabis or are fearful this type of legislation will be a gateway to recreational use. The only way this could happen in the state of Nebraska is if our legislators in the Unicameral allowed it to. LB 643 is modeled after Minnesota's law, the strictest medical cannabis program in the country.

As the mother of a son who suffers from seizures on a daily basis, I was literally crying, begging, and pleading with legislators last session to help our family. I was told on several occasions that legislators were concerned about the bill being a slippery slope or the message it would send to our youth.

What about my 13-year-old son who cannot talk, is legally blind, still in diapers, and is cognitively a 2-year-old? Does he not count as a part of that youth? What about other children and adults who are suffering from debilitating disorders/diseases like him? They are real, live, breathing Nebraskans who need to start being put first and having their protection be what we're concerned about, not that of the hypothetical abuser.

Twenty-five other states, plus Washington, D.C., have already implemented medical cannabis programs for their most sick and suffering citizens. It's time for Nebraska to step up and do the same.

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Bellevue