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### Guidelines for Writing Letters to the Editor:

Writing a letter to the editor is one of the best ways to respond to articles, editorials or op-eds published in your local paper. You can submit a letter to amplify a positive editorial, mitigate the damage caused by a harmful op-ed or highlight key information left out of an article.

The letters section of a newspaper is popular with readers -- and policy makers pay close attention to letters that express the views of constituents. KCADP is here to help.

### The following are some tips for writing a successful letter-to-the editor:

- **Swift response - Timeliness is key.** After you identify a story or editorial that needs a response, draft your letter as soon as possible. Make sure it highlights at least one of our messaging points (listed below). Your letter should first be sent to the KCADP Writer's Bureau for review, and KCADP will contact you regarding submitting your letter.
- **Read the letters section** - Read letters to the editor published recently by the newspaper. If yours is similar in format, it may be more likely to be published.
- **Follow the rules** - Look for the paper's guidelines about format, length and other requirements. You may find these on the paper's website or printed in the paper near the letters section. If you can't find them, call the newspaper and ask. Your letter could be rejected if it doesn't follow their rules.
- **Brief is best** - Keep your letter brief and to the point - focus on making one key point in two or three paragraphs, and use just a couple of key facts or statistics, or a very brief story, to support your argument. Generally letters are limited to 150-200 words. It is critical that information is accurate, so KCADP is always available and responsive to fact check or help with messaging.

**While it's difficult to create a template Letter to the Editor (LTE) that will work in all situations, it is clear that the letters that are most likely to be published:**

- 1) Respond directly to a specific piece published in the newspaper
- 2) Adhere to the paper's guidelines for submission

### Our messages include: *Six Questions about the Death Penalty:*

- 1) Does it deter crime? (No evidence)
- 2) Does it save money? (No, it costs 3-4 times more)
- 3) Are innocent people ever convicted? (Yes, over 145 persons exonerated since 1973)
- 4) Is the death penalty system fair? (No, arbitrary factors impact it - location, economic factors, quality/experience of attorney, racial and ethnic factors)
- 5) Does it provide closure for victims' families? (Many families say no.)
- 6) Is it humane? (No, recent botched executions were not humane; all are at risk of errors in the procedure)

For more information, contact Carolyn Zimmerman, Bureau Chief - Kansas Coalition Against the Death Penalty - Writers and Speakers Bureau. Phone: 785-383-5393 or email to [cjzim@sbcglobal.net](mailto:cjzim@sbcglobal.net).

JUSTICE WITHOUT A DOUBT.