



## Just Fund It TX Editorial Guide

### Amplify Our Voices:

We may not have power, officially, but we certainly have power in our collective voice. We pay our elected officials to listen to us. Sadly, too few constituents actually reach out to them. Just Fund It TX encourages you to speak out, tell your story, and persuade our legislators to pass laws that reflect our priorities.

#### **Review: Do the right thing: adequately fund public education!**

1. The state should PAY its share to fund our schools-- at least 50% (currently only 38%).
2. Money raised for education should be used for education.
3. Overall spending must increase to:
  1. Meet our students' growing needs
  2. Provide proven programs that prepare our students for college, career, citizenship, and life.
  3. Attract and retain high quality teachers.

### **CALLING ALL STUDENTS: YOU ARE THE MOST EFFECTIVE ADVOCATES!!**

#### **Two routes:**

1. **Letter to the editor:** Letters to the editor are the easiest way to get your voice heard. Aim for 150- 300 words, depending on the publication. Make every word count! To increase your chances of being published, begin your letter as a response to a news story or editorial you have read recently in the paper/website. If possible, refer to the article by headline or date in the beginning of your letter or link it to a current event. With the legislative session so short, anything you write on this subject will be timely. Still, look for a good hook or way in.
2. **Write an op-ed.** An op-ed is a persuasive essay on a timely topic. Your purpose is to inform and persuade. Here you have more words, depending on the publication (500 - 700), but you still want to stay on point. As with the letter to the editor, make it timely. The more you can link it to a current event, the more likely your chances are of being heard.

#### **Tips:**

Remember, your first sentence or lead/lede must be a true hook. Make your first sentence so compelling that people have to keep reading.

### **DO BE SURE TO:**

- Take a clear stand and make your point.
- Seek common ground. For instance, who doesn't want what's best for children? We ALL want an educated citizenry and students prepared for good jobs in the workforce, which benefits our state economy.
- Use statistics but sparingly. Don't be a datahead. **MAKE SURE YOUR FACTS ARE ACCURATE** and that your sources are **LEGITIMATE**. (more later)
- Use personal anecdotes. How does the school finance funding shortfall/crisis affect you personally? Share stories of people you know. Personal stories are the emotional bait.
- Give a little to the other side and then refute. For instance, some say we don't have the money. Argue that we do.
- Provide solutions (the three goals up top). Put in your own words.

### **AND REMEMBER ONE VERY IMPORTANT DON'T:**

- Don't insult your audience or those on the other side. You're trying to win them over, right?

## **Newspapers? Yes, newspapers!**

Even though newspaper circulation readership is down, newspapers still carry authority, and the articles can be socialized easily through social media and the paper's own online presence. If your letter or op-ed is behind a paywall, take a photo of it and attach it to your social media accounts. There's a better chance people will read it if they don't have to click something.

### **Try these news venues for letters:**

The Austin-American Statesman

[letters@statesman.com](mailto:letters@statesman.com)

Up to 150 words

Include name, address, city, phone

The Dallas Morning News

<https://www.dallasnews.com/opinion/letters-to-the-editor/2018/12/02/submit-letter-editor>

Up to 200 words

Include name, address, city, phone

The Houston Chronicle

[viewpoints@chron.com](mailto:viewpoints@chron.com)

Up to 250 words

Include name, address, phone numbers, Twitter handle (if you have one)

The Waco Herald Tribune

[letters@wacotrib.com](mailto:letters@wacotrib.com)

Up to 300 words

Name, address, city, phone

For all other local newspapers throughout Texas, try this handy link.

<https://www.nationalpopularvote.com/writing-letter-editor-texas>

## For OP-EDs:

### A few more tips:

- **Do not send multiple submissions.** You don't want to burn bridges. If you haven't heard back in ten days, send a short follow-up asking if you can send it elsewhere.
- **Copy and Paste essay into body of email.** You can also attach, but some publications will not open attachments.
- **Introduction:** In the title line of your email write: Op-ed submission: followed by a brief title.
- Begin with: Dear Editor  
Close with: Best or Sincerely,
- Thank them for their time and attention and say you look forward to hearing from them soon. (But you may not).

### And some places to submit your op-ed:

The Austin American-Statesman  
[views@statesman.com](mailto:views@statesman.com)  
Up to 600-650 words  
Include name, address, telephone numbers

The Houston Chronicle  
[outlook@chron.com](mailto:outlook@chron.com)  
Up to 700 words  
No attachments, please. Include name, address, phone numbers, Twitter handle (if you have one)

The Dallas Morning News  
[viewpoints@dallasnews.com](mailto:viewpoints@dallasnews.com)  
Up to 600 words (but shorter is better)  
Include name, address, phone numbers, what you do for a living (including student) or other relevant information

The Texas Tribune  
Trib Talk  
[tribtalk@texastribune.org](mailto:tribtalk@texastribune.org)  
Between 500 - 700 words (keep it short); 1-5 minutes if audio or video

For all other local newspapers throughout Texas, try this handy link.  
<https://www.nationalpopularvote.com/writing-letter-editor-texas>

## Examples:

I have most of my experience with the Austin American-Statesman and Trib Talk with Texas Tribune. Both are really great places to be published.

Here are a few examples of my work:

Trib Talk with Texas Tribune:

<https://www.tribtalk.org/2017/12/20/the-education-testing-charade/>

<https://www.tribtalk.org/2018/05/22/will-texas-teachers-walk-out/>

Valerie Strauss Answer Sheet: The Washington Post:

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2018/05/21/teachers-killed-in-texas-school-shooting-were-substitutes-the-forgotten-force-of-the-education-world/?utm\\_term=.d6e93d39c419](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2018/05/21/teachers-killed-in-texas-school-shooting-were-substitutes-the-forgotten-force-of-the-education-world/?utm_term=.d6e93d39c419)

The Austin American-Statesman:

<https://www.statesman.com/opinion/20190102/commentary-in-2019-texas-should-resolve-to-save-its-teachers>

<https://www.statesman.com/news/20180411/commentary-why-our-youngest-generation-needs-your-compassion>

And NOW for a warning: I once wrote in a flurry a great piece comparing STAAR testing to *The Hunger Games*, just as the movie came out. It generated a lot of buzz. THEN I got a call from Gardner Selby of Politifact Texas. I had been sloppy in my facts and too loosely interpreted the number of days students spend testing. Not only was I “outed” in Politifact, but they used a terrible photo of me!  
Lesson learned!

So, BOOKMARK LINKS FOR EVERY FACT SOURCE! And remember to evaluate your sources **carefully**, using the CRAAP method:

Currency  
Relevance  
Accuracy  
Author  
Purpose

I wrote about this issue in Knowledge Quest:

<https://knowledgequest.aasl.org/information-literacy-lessons-crucial-post-truth-world/>

In conclusion, every writer has an editor. We all need them. Choose at least one person whose feedback you trust: teacher, parent, friend. Ask this person(s) to look over what you’ve written. **Please correct any grammatical, spelling, or punctuation errors before submitting.** We are often too close to our work and fill in, with our own minds, points that aren’t clear to others. Remember, you won’t be able to stand by and explain if someone misunderstands you.

Have fun! Please SHARE your successes with the group, using our hashtag #JustFundItTx.

Feel free to reach out to me:

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