Writing Letters to the Editor
Target: Senators Maria Cantwell and Patty Murray
Legislation: The Preventing Preemptive War in North Korea Act, Senate Bill 2047

Why write an LTE?
- It's a great way to influence your community and your legislators. The letters page is among the most widely read pages of the newspaper.
- It's free and it's easy.
- You can influence the newspaper even if your letter is not printed. Editors take note of how many letters they receive on a given topic. It's like sending an action alert to a legislator – a large volume of letters can determine what topics they are going to cover.


A = About. Write about something that's in the newspaper. Take as your starting point a recent item in the newspaper. Cite the article by headline, author and/or date. Best chance of being printed: responding to an editorial, op-ed, or front-page story.

B = Brief. Most newspapers have a policy limiting the length of letters. Typically 200-250 words. The policy is usually posted on the paper's letters page or website.

C = Concise. Keep it short and simple. Make one central point, then stop. (If you have to give a lot of background information or cite a lot of facts, you may need to write an op-ed article, not an LTE.)

1. State the issue.
   - Refer to the issue as reported in the newspaper, then say why you agree or disagree, AND/OR
   - State the issue as you understand it.

2. Build your case
   - Say your piece in your own voice. Be yourself, be authoritative.
   - While you stick to the facts, don't be afraid to let your feelings be known too. If you're terrified by climate change… if you're worried sick for your patients, or for your kids or your grandkids, say so. People don't remember facts. They do remember when you speak from your heart.

3. Call to action. This what we do - we inspire people to take action. So:
   - Put the bill name or number directly in the letter.
   - Use the full names of members of Congress.
   - If your letter is published, send it to the target legislator or corporation with a brief cover note. This doubles your impact.

Tips and rules.
- **Timeliness is critical** — submit by e-mail.
- **Local connections** sell newspapers — newspapers love 'em. So be sure to mention if you:
  - live/work/study in the newspaper's home area.
  - are talking about a local politician.
  - Have a local connection to this issue
- **Sign with your full name.**
  - State an organization you're a part of, or Washington Against Nuclear Weapons
  - For verification purposes, include your home address, e-mail address, and daytime telephone number. These will not be published.
- **Edits.** Your letter is subject to editing by the newspaper for length, clarity and style. Avoid unhappiness by keeping your letter short.
Uniqueness. Your submission must be unique. When the newspaper runs your LTE, it becomes part of their product — they want to know you have not submitted it to or published it in any other media. Respect this requirement.

SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Please note: this letter was responding to an article on a slightly different topic, so uses different talking points, but is an excellent example of the guidelines above. Also, this letter should not be copied, as it has already been submitted.

“Thank you to Erik Lacitis for reporting on what would happen in a nuclear attack on Seattle. This vital issue is often overlooked, despite Seattle’s close proximity to the largest collection of nuclear weapons in the US (at the Bangor Naval Base).

One thing missing from the article is a mention of what residents can do to prevent these nightmare scenarios. We can - and should! - press our elected representatives to do more toward nuclear nonproliferation and supporting policies that would better protect against a nuclear detonation. Having fewer nuclear weapons reduces the risk of accidents. Instead, Congress is currently planning to rebuild the entire US arsenal, to the tune of $1.7 trillion dollars.

We can also push for restrictions on the President’s ability to launch nuclear weapons — by advocating for the Restricting First Use of Nuclear Weapons Act (House bill 669 – supported by Pramila Jayapal and Denny Heck; Senate bill 200) and the Preventing Preemptive War in North Korea Act (Senate bill 2047). Pressing Senators Maria Cantwell and Patty Murray to step up on these bills sends an important message that we are not content to sit idly by while our President and his advisors casually promote a new nuclear arms race.”

TALKING POINTS for the current situation with North Korea

Please note: you will not be able to cover all of these points in your letter, so pick the ones that resonate most with you. But always be sure to reference the information in the first bullet point!

- We are advocating for Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell to co-sponsor The Preventing Preemptive War in North Korea Act, Senate Bill 2047
- Senate Bill 2016, the No Unconstitutional Strike Against North Korea Act and the companion House Bill 4837, are very similar to SB 2047. We support all of these bills.
- This bill would prevent military action in North Korea without Congressional approval. Without this measure, President Trump has sole authority to launch a nuclear or conventional attack on North Korea.
- Recent diplomatic progress (like the Inter-Korean Summit taking place on April 27th, and North Korea closing their nuclear test site), give us reason to hope. But with such volatile leaders and such a complex situation, this could change in a heartbeat. We need an assurance that this crisis will not re-escalate and turn into a military conflict.
- In addition, it’s crucial that as we go through this diplomatic process, the US demonstrates a commitment to diplomatic negotiations with North Korea. Committing to no military action without Congressional approval would be an important step in the right direction.
- Here in WA state, we are at particular risk because of the military bases in the area, nuclear submarines housed at Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor, and proximity to North Korea. Our members of Congress have a responsibility to protect WA residents.
- This bill simply reinforces Congress’ constitutional authority to declare war, one of the checks-and-balances that our government is built on.
- The Department of Defense has estimated that a war on the Korean Peninsula would result in 20,000 deaths per day. If nuclear weapons are ever used, deaths could be in the millions.
- 70 years after the use of nuclear weapons in conflict, knowing everything that we know about their inhumanity and awful power, it is unacceptable for the US to consider their use or lead us into a situation in which they may be used.