



Letter to the Editor Toolkit

As we move closer to a potential strike, it is critical that our community hear the voices of our members and supporters. Letters to the Editor (LTEs) are a great way to be part of the conversation. This toolkit contains instructions for submitting letters, helpful tips and tricks, and samples to help guide your letter writing.

When to Write and Submit a Letter

Papers typically publish LTEs in response to news coverage. The best time to write and submit a letter is the same day a relevant news story is published. Sometimes papers may publish up to a week later, but ideally your letter should be written and submitted the same day.

How Long Can My Letter Be?

Different papers have different rules:

- For the Spokesman-Review: 250 words max
- For The Inlander: No set limit, but we recommend no more than 300 words

How Do I Submit My Letter?

We strongly recommend submitting your letter online, using the emails or forms below. With all letters, you must include your full name, phone number, and street address. Use the subject line "Letter re: [TOPIC]" and submit letters to:

- Spokesman Review: email editor@spokesman.com or [submit via this online form](#)
- The Inlander: email editor@inlander.com

Starting Your Letter

Start by making a reference to the story you're responding to, with an opening line like, "I read your story '[STORY TITLE].' I'm a nurse at Providence Sacred Heart, and I want to share what we see every day."

What Should I Write About?

Once you've started your letter, speak from the heart. You're an expert with real-world, lived experience, and the best letters reflect your personality and expertise.

Close with a Call to Action

If you can, close with a call to action for readers so people feel empowered to help.



FOR NURSES: Talking About Our Potential Strike

Here are some points you might want to include in your LTE, as appropriate. It's best if you make these your own, but it's OK to copy/paste.

We Don't Strike Lightly

- Nurses have been negotiating for more than a year
- Providence has ignored our concerns over patient care, safety and fair benefits
- We will only strike as a last resort to protect our patients and our earned benefits

Paid Time Off Benefits

- Providence is taking away sick time and paid leave nurses have earned
- If Providence takes away our sick time and cuts our PTO, that hurts our families and patients, too
- Nurses and other workers are simply asking to keep the benefits we've already earned so we can care for ourselves, our families and our patients
- Providence wants to push the cost of sick time onto hardworking taxpayers by taking advantage of the state's new Paid Family and Medical Leave plan.

Safety and Patient Care

- We're asking for safe staffing at Sacred Heart so nurses can safely care for every patient
- We're fighting for real safety measures to protect everyone in our hospital
- Our working conditions are your healing conditions—we're working to ensure our patients get the care they deserve

Corporate Greed

- Providence calls stealing our benefits "modernization," but it's just corporate greed
- Providence made \$1 billion in profits in the first half of 2019—that's \$5.3 million in profits every day. They can afford to take care of the nurses who take care of you
- Corporate CEOs from a boardroom in Seattle only see our hospital in dollars and cents, but we're fighting for quality care for our community and fair treatment for workers

Make It Personal!

Remember, your personal experience is the most powerful thing you can share. Here are some helpful things to think about as you decide what to say:

- Have you personally used Earned Illness Benefit (EIB) or Paid Time Off (PTO) to care for a family member?
- Have you needed EIB or PTO for yourself?
- How does insufficient staffing harm you and your patients (remember HIPAA rules!)



- Have you experienced violence on the job?
- How would your job and patient care improve if we had full staffing every shift?

Sample LTEs: Nurses

NURSE: Earned Illness and PTO

I'm writing in response to your story "Nurses Give Strike Notice at Sacred Heart." I've been a nurse at Providence Sacred Heart for XX years. I didn't vote to strike lightly, but I'm not willing to sit by while Providence steals what nurses have earned and puts patients in danger.

The Earned Illness Benefit is personal for me. [INSERT PERSONAL STORY LIKE: Two years ago, my mom got sick and needed round-the-clock care. I was able to stay by her bedside and be there in her final moments thanks to our earned illness benefit.]

But if Providence has their way nurses will have to choose between caring for our families and paying our bills. Not only that, they're trying to take away paid time off we've already earned and trying to limit how much we can earn in the future.

When the union called for a strike vote, every single nurse I know took it seriously. This is an extreme step, but when corporate CEOs who don't live here refuse to listen to the workers who care for the patients at Sacred Heart, we have no other choice. We're fighting to keep what we've earned, and to ensure every patient who walks through our doors receives the excellent care they deserve.

Nurses and other workers are so grateful to have thousands of members of our community behind us. I hope Providence will reverse course and settle a deal that gives workers what we've earned and protects patient care.

NURSE: Safe Staffing and Patient Care

I'm writing in response to your story "Nurses Give Strike Notice at Sacred Heart." As a XX year nurse, I voted to strike. Let me explain why I'll be walking a picket line.

For the past year, we've been at the table with Providence Sacred Heart, but we're really negotiating with Seattle-based executives from Providence St. Joseph Health, the third-largest health system in the U.S.



We've asked Providence to guarantee full nurse staffing on every shift, but so far they're putting their corporate bottom line over our Spokane community.

As an ER nurse, I see what happens when our hospital isn't fully staffed every day. When patients come to us, our goal is to get them to the correct team as quickly as possible. Nurses in each department have special skills. We always do our best to care for everyone in our care in the ER, but patients should be with the teams that are trained to treat their condition.

Thanks to corporate staffing cuts, there often aren't enough nurses in other departments to handle more patients, so people stay in the ER as long as 24 hours.

Those delays mean longer waits before patients are seen in the ER, and delays in care for patients once they're admitted.

If Providence refuses to settle, I hope our community will remember that we're standing up for you while we're fighting for a fair contract and the benefits we've earned.



TIPS FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS

We're so grateful for the support of our community. If you're a community member writing a letter on our behalf, here is some information that might help, and some tips on writing a letter.

Make It Personal!

The most powerful thing you can share is a story about why a fair contract for Sacred Heart nurses and staff matters to you. Here are some questions to think about:

- How has a nurse at Sacred Heart made a difference for you?
- Why does it matter to you that nurses have earned sick leave?
- How does it make you feel that a multi-billion dollar healthcare system is trying to take benefits away from working people in Spokane?

SAMPLE LTE: FORMER PATIENT

I'm writing in response to your story "Nurses to Strike at Sacred Heart."

Last year, I [INSERT CONDITION/CIRCUMSTANCE], and I was treated at Sacred Heart.

[INSERT SHORT PERSONAL ANECDOTE ABOUT A NURSE]

The nurses at Sacred Heart did more than just treat me—they took care of me. Now it's time for us to take care of them.

Providence claims dignity, justice and integrity are their core values, and their mission is part of God's healing love. But it's obviously the almighty dollar is driving the policies that are causing this strike.

Executives in Seattle who make millions of dollars a year are coming to Spokane to steal paid sick leave from the nurses who took care of me. That's not OK with me. If Providence refuses to settle a fair deal, I'll be on the picket line to support the Spokane nurses who care for our community.



SAMPLE LTE: DOCTOR

I'm writing in response to your story "Nurses at Sacred Heart to Strike." As an ER Doctor, I know the critical role nurses play, and I'm standing with them as they prepare to strike.

The Emergency Room is a tough place to work. Nurses work long hours under incredible stress. The people we see are almost always scared. Many are in terrible pain. They look to us for healing, but also for comfort and compassion. Everyone on our staff takes that mission seriously.

But in recent years, corporate suits from Seattle have forced one-size-fits-all policies on our community hospital, which has stretched nursing staff to the limit.

Often, we can't transfer a patient out of the ER for hours—sometimes even a full day—because there aren't enough nurses to care for them. That means our nurses are fighting to care for patients who need specialized care.

Not only that, but now corporate wants to strip away earned time off. Our nurses are exposed to every illness imaginable and sometimes even violence in the workplace—the last thing we need is nurses who get hurt or sick coming in to work because they can't afford to take a day off.

Our nurses aren't just fighting for themselves—they're fighting for everyone in our community. I'm proud to stand with them, and I hope your readers will too.