

A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a silver pen, writing in a notebook. The hand is wearing a ring. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a person's face and some wooden elements. A semi-transparent white box is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the title and presenter information.

HOW TO WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR (LTE)

Catholic Mobilizing Network
webinar presented by
Margot Friedman and
Emma Tacke



Letters to the Editor are important

for ending the death penalty because:

- Monitored by elected officials
- Reach a large audience
- Amplify support for abolition
- Raise facts/arguments that may have been overlooked in an article or editorial
- Represent the faith voice/moral perspective



We need letter writers.

When a policymaker sees a letter to the editor in the newspaper, they know that one person represents many others.



LTE Example and Excerpts

- "The Amarillo Globe-News editorial (Editorial: Keep focus on justice, April 14) took the wrong position legally and morally."

Amarillo Globe-News

April 19, 2016

Death row inmate deserves legal, moral justice

By May Hochstein

The Amarillo Globe-News editorial (Editorial: Keep focus on justice, April 14, amarillo.com) took the wrong position, legally and morally.

Death row prisoner Duane Buck was sentenced after his lawyer allowed a jury to be told he poses a greater danger simply because of the color of his skin.

There is no crime so great that it overrides our constitution, which is why Texas agreed to hold new resentencing hearings free of racial bias for six other men in the same position.

But for some unknown reason, Buck is the only one who did not receive a new sentencing hearing.

No one is saying that Mr. Buck should be released or punished lightly. The incredible multitude of voices saying he should have a new sentencing hearing free of racial bias, however, includes one of the former prosecutors, a former Texas governor, many people of faith and legal professionals.

Even the surviving victim of the crime does not believe justice requires an execution, but a new sentencing hearing.

A committed Christian such as myself thinks the power of forgiveness and redemption is paramount.

Legally and morally, what happened to Buck was wrong. Texas should give him a new sentencing hearing.

The time to evaluate his crime and punishment will be in that hearing, not while arguing about whether or not a new hearing should occur.

May Hochstein
Amarillo



Message Guidance

- For Catholics and many people of good will, the death penalty is unacceptable in all circumstances because it offends the dignity of human life.
- All life is valuable and each of us has been created in the image of God. People do not lose their humanity, even after the commission of a serious crime.



Message Guidance, Continued...

- **The death penalty is a broken system beyond repair.**

Courts and legislatures have been tinkering with the machinery of death for almost 50 years, but the system has still not gotten it right. It is past time to end capital punishment once and for all.

- **Americans have grown increasingly uncomfortable with capital punishment.**

Whether it's concerns about executing the innocent, arbitrariness and unfairness in application, high costs, the lack of evidence that the death penalty deters offenders, or other reasons.



Message Guidance, Continued...

- Restorative justice seeks to repair the harm caused by crime. This framework helps us to envision creative approaches to justice that value human dignity, enable healing, and create spaces for redemption.



Upcoming LTE Hooks



- Respect Life Month - October
- WDADP - October 10
- Annual DPIC End-of-Year report - December
- deathpenaltyinfo.org
- Advent Season - December
- Resumption of federal executions - December 9



Upcoming LTE Hooks

- Release of Just Mercy film - January 10
- State repeal or other death penalty related bills -
January-May
- Black History Month - February
- Lent & Easter Season - February- April
- Any scheduled state execution - Ongoing



Tips for Placements

- Follow the news. Look for stories and events (e.g., execution dates, year end statistics) that will make your letter timely
- Media outlet websites have an email address to submit your letter. Check the word limit and submission rules
- Most LTE's are short and concise:
150-200 words



Tips for Placements, Continued...

- Respond quickly to the editor
- She may take the first well-written letter she receives
- Include your firsthand, personal experiences.
- Share your faith and speak from the heart



After your letter appears, don't assume that people have seen it

- Send it to policymakers, people who influence policymakers, other volunteers, and your entire list of contacts
- Post to all of your social media accounts (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram)
- Ask your friends to share the link



After your letter appears, continued

- Email the link to reporters as an FYI. This will help keep you "top of mind" as a resource on the death penalty
- Send the link to TV and radio producers and hosts of podcasts to pitch yourself as a guest.

CMN is here as a resource for your LTEs before and after they are published. If you have any questions contact: **emmat@catholicmobilizing.org**



Want to go further?

Write an opinion editorial or guest column.

These are 700 word essays that give you more time and space to state your opposition to the death penalty.

