

A TOOLKIT FOR WRITING OP-EDS

This toolkit is designed to support anyone in authoring an op-ed in order to express their opinion about an important issue.

An op-ed is a powerful avenue for expressing your opinion, shaping or swaying public opinion, and increasing recognition for your cause or organization. Plus, when op-eds are written by authors of a multitude of backgrounds, identities, and experiences, they help to make the news we consume more representative.

Included within this toolkit are an overview of op-eds by definition, a brief how-to guide, topical ideas for future op-eds from any of you, and a list of example op-eds from the Andrew Goodman Network.

OVERVIEW

What is an op-ed? The word “op-ed” is short for “opposite the editorial page” or “opinion editorial.” Coined before the digital age, op-eds are opinion pieces that are printed in a newspaper’s opinion section, on the opposite side of the page from the editorial section. These days, of course, op-eds — and news more broadly — also live online. Typically, op-eds express the opinion of and are written by an author who is not associated with the publication.

HOW TO WRITE AN OP-ED

Recommended Structure

A successful op-ed — one that not only gets published, but that also leaves a mark on its readers — follows the recommended five-part structure below.

1. **Lede:** A lede is a relevant hook at the very beginning of an op-ed, even within its first couple of sentences. The lede grabs readers’ attention and pulls them in to continue reading.

2. **Main Point:** The main point of an op-ed is the central argument that readers should understand and take away from the piece. It should be clear, concise, and near the beginning so readers know what the author's point is up front.
3. **Sub-Points:** The sub-points (about three) of an op-ed should support the main point. Each sub-point should bolster the main point, as well as add researched evidence or personal examples that give the author credibility to speak on this issue.
4. **Counter Argument:** The counter argument is an opportunity to anticipate the opposing opinion and dismantle it. Before including a counter argument, evaluate whether it is worth giving it further air time.
5. **Conclusion:** The conclusion should not only hearken back to the main point of the op-ed, but should also include a call to action (or "CTA") that tells readers what they should do now that they have been convinced of your argument.

Useful Tips

In addition to the five-part recommended structure, consider the following tips for authoring and publishing an impactful op-ed:

- Write no more than 750 words
- Write short sentences and paragraphs in the active voice
- Make a single point clearly and persuasively in the first couple of sentences
- Address why the reader should care by answering the question "so what?"
- Use colorful examples, especially from your own experiences
- Play up your local connection to the media outlet and its readers
- Follow a desired media outlet's submission guidelines when submitting your op-ed

TOPICS FOR OP-EDS ON VOTING RIGHTS

Are you interested in writing an op-ed? Brainstorm what issues matter to you or if there are any pressing concerns in your community that need to be addressed. Make a short list of what you come up with, and determine which idea has the most potential for you to support with the recommended structure above. Then start drafting!

If you need a spark to start your brainstorm, consider the following topics for op-eds on voting rights:

- The power and value of the vote
- A campus holiday for Election Day
- Expanded early voting period
- Additional dropbox locations
- An on-campus polling place

- Student IDs that are eligible as voter ID
- The need for youth poll workers
- The benefit of automatic or same-day voter registration
- The role campuses should play in democratic engagement
- Pro-voter legislation that should be passed
- Anti-voter legislation that should not be passed
- And much more!

EXAMPLE OP-EDS FROM THE ANDREW GOODMAN NETWORK

When you start drafting your own op-ed, it may be helpful to get your footing by taking a look at several examples, especially ones that are related to voting rights. Check out the following examples of op-eds written by members of the Andrew Goodman Network and published in a variety of news outlets, from the campus to national level:

- Blavity, [How The Divine Nine Is Mobilizing The HBCU Student's Vote](#)
- Blavity, [In 2022 Voting Rights Are Unbelievably Still Under Attack, But Young Americans Have The Power To Change It](#)
- Blavity, [Our Democracy Depends On It: Why Young People Should Consider Becoming Poll Workers](#)
- Blavity, [SB202, Georgia's Bill Threatening Voter Rights, Is A Threat To Fair Voting Access For All Of Us](#)
- Blavity, [We Voted, Now What? Five Ways To Stay Engaged Between Elections](#)
- Clarion Ledger, [Ahmaud Arbery Case Shines Light On Continued Miscarriages Of Justice In Legal Community](#)
- Facing South, [VOICES: Georgia's New Voting Law Is An Assault On Our Democracy's Future](#)
- Facing South, [VOICES: How Student Can Fight Back Against Attacks On Their Voting Rights](#)
- Facing South, [VOICES: The Fixes To Georgia's Voting Restrictions Await Action In Congress](#)
- NewsOne, [Op-Ed: Voting Rights Fight Requires Trust In The Process Of Progress](#)
- Teen Vogue, [Georgia Voting Law Criminalizes The Work Of Activists Like Me](#)
- The Advocate, [LSU Student Leader: Louisiana Should Expand Early Voting](#)
- The Crimson White, [Open Letter: Election Day Should Be A Campus Holiday](#)
- The Crimson White, [Opinion: How HB129 Could Dismantle Voter Suppression](#)
- The Crimson White, [The Voting Rights Act Needs A Revival](#)
- The Daily Utah Chronicle, [Guest Opinion: Voting Is One Part In Our Fight For Change](#)
- The Gainesville Sun, [Give College Students Equal Access To Early Voting](#)
- The Hill, [Are We Becoming The America That Allowed The Freedom Summer Tragedy?](#)

- The Hill, [Student Voter Suppression Is An Affront To The Memory Of Andrew Goodman](#)
- The Hill, [Students Want To Vote: Colleges Ought To Help](#)
- The Hill, [Voting Rights Are Under Siege — The 26th Amendment Could Be Their Salvation](#)
- The Hoya, [VIEWPOINT: Maintain Consistent Civic Engagement](#)

Op-Ed Impact Spotlight

In November 2017, an Andrew Goodman Ambassador at the University of Florida named Megan Newsome [published the Gainesville Sun op-ed listed above](#). In her op-ed, Megan argued that college and university students should be able to vote early on campus. Florida Secretary of State Kenneth Detzner's discriminatory interpretation of Florida Statue 101.657 effectively prohibited public college and university campuses from being selected for early voting sites.

By June 2018, Newsome's article had catalyzed legal action — with Newsome, the League of Women Voters of Florida, and The Andrew Goodman Foundation as plaintiffs among others — against Secretary of State Detzner. And the rest is history. The Andrew Goodman Foundation won that lawsuit, leading to 12 on-campus early voting sites across the state of Florida in time for the 2018 Midterm Elections. Over 60,000 voters used those sites to cast their ballots, and it all started with an effective student-written op-ed.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For more information on how to write an op-ed, [read this guide](#) from experts at The Washington Post.