



Advocacy Tool: How To Write Opinion Pieces, Get Them Placed, and Follow Up Successfully

April 2025

I. What Is an Opinion Piece?

Opinion pieces are written to express viewpoints and influence public opinion. They can take various forms:

1. **Op-Ed:** Written by subject matter experts or individuals with unique perspectives.
2. **Editorials:** Represent the voice of a newspaper's publisher and editors.
3. **Letters to the Editor:** Typically respond to published articles.

II. Why Write an Opinion Piece

Opinion pieces serve multiple purposes. They can:

1. **Empower impacted individuals** by giving them a platform.
2. **Offer different or reinforced perspectives** on important issues.
3. **Demonstrate allyship** and solidarity.
4. **Engage legislators** directly.
5. **Increase visibility** for pressing matters.

III. Structure of an Opinion Piece

To write an effective opinion piece, follow these guidelines:

1. **Word Limit:** Adhere to the publication's guidelines.
2. **Authorship:** Decide if the piece is personal or represents a group.
3. **Lede:** Craft a compelling introduction to capture attention, make it around a news hook.
 - **Crafting a Powerful Lede** - A strong lede can take many forms:
 - **Dramatic Anecdote**
 - **News or Pop Culture Reference**
 - **Wit and Irony**

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- **Personal Stories**
- **New Studies or Resources**
- **Anniversaries or Timely Events**

Examples:

- *"Millions of American families across the United States could be torn apart by the anti-immigrant policies in the far-right's Project 2025 plan."* – Victor Guillen Febres, Teen Vogue
- *"The outrageous accusations against Haitians in Springfield, Ohio, are part of a dangerous historical pattern of scapegoating."* – Marleine Bastien and Brian Concannon, Miami Herald

4. **Thesis:** Clearly state your argument.
5. **Argument and Evidence:** Support each point with solid evidence.
6. **Conclusion:** Tie the arguments together with a memorable closing.

IV. Best Practices for Writing

1. Focus on one or two strong points to avoid diluting your message.
2. Explain why the issue matters to your audience.
3. Introduce yourself and your credibility.
4. Speak in the first person and convey your personal voice.
5. Acknowledge opposing views to build credibility before refuting them.

V. Where to Publish

A. Considerations for placement include:

1. **Audience:** Match the outlet's readership with your target audience.
2. **Connections:** Leverage existing relationships with publications.
3. **Scope:** Decide if your piece fits best with local, state, or national outlets.
4. **Options:** Explore nonprofit columns, niche media, or personal blogs.

B. When pitching your piece, address:

1. **Timeliness:** Why now?
2. **Your Authority:** Showcase your credentials and unique perspective.
3. **Relevance:** Explain why the issue matters to the outlet's audience.

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VI. What to Expect if Published

- The publication may edit your headline or content.
- Some outlets pay for submissions; others do not.
- Exclusivity requirements vary; inquire before submitting elsewhere.
- Follow up respectfully if you're awaiting a decision.

VII. If You Don't Get Published

- Request feedback from editors.
- Revise and submit to a different outlet.
- Consider a new angle or timing for your piece.
- Self-publish via blogs or social media platforms.

VIII. Amplify Your Published Piece

- Share widely on social media.
- Engage legislators and impacted groups.
- Collaborate with community members to increase visibility.

Sample Op Ed:

The Cost of 287(g): The Erasure of Human Dignity, the Fear of Reporting Crimes, the Money Marylanders Pay, and Our Complicity With Immigration Enforcement

Once again, Maryland is considering getting rid of a dreaded program that tears communities apart, stops immigrant victims from reporting crimes, and becomes a drain on taxpayer resources. As migrants face an ever-growing fear of enforcement and how it is brutally conducted in this country, let us hope that our beloved state passes the [Maryland Values Act](#) to eliminate 287(g) in Maryland.

The 287(g) program was [created](#) under the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996. It allows the federal government to enter into written agreements with states to deputize local authorities in certain immigration functions. However, these programs are completely unnecessary, are costly to communities, and keep Maryland law enforcement focused on federal immigration issues instead of their own communities.

As someone who has worked with immigrant survivors of gender-based violence, I can definitively say that 287(g) does not keep our communities safer. I once received a call from one of my clients who was terrified that an officer from a 287(g) agency was at her home. Her abuser

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had told her reporting his violence would result in her deportation and that she would lose her children. Those of us doing work in this area have too many [stories](#) of clients who act in self-defense and are erroneously arrested when their abuser claims they were the ones assaulted. While bogus criminal charges may be thrown out eventually, the impact of being detained and placed in immigration removal is both devastating and lasting. Because of this, knowing that your Law Enforcement Agency (LEA) is participating in 287(g) enhances [fear](#) in the community and [prevents](#) victims from reporting.

There are many reasons why 287(g) agreements are wasteful and unnecessary. For one, there are already many ways ICE can obtain information and detain immigrants who are convicted of various serious crimes; they do not need the cooperation of local law officers through 287(g). A 2022 [report](#) from the Georgetown Law Center on Privacy & Technology describes ICE as a “sweeping surveillance dragnet” that accesses information in so many ways “often without any judicial, legislative or public oversight.” There is also [mandatory detention](#) where those convicted of certain removable offenses must be taken into custody and held without bond by law. In addition to all of this, ICE can always ensure they are following due process by obtaining a judicial warrant that is backed by probable cause in order to detain someone.

Some LEAs like to pretend that these agreements are capturing people who otherwise would not be caught in other exchange of information or detainer requests (neither of which are prohibited by this bill). Sacrificing our immigrant communities to help ICE avoid due process is not the choice Maryland should make.

In addition to this, states and localities are the ones who [pay](#) for the 287(g) costs. While ICE does the initial set up and training, everything that comes after such as salaries and benefits, local transportation, and official issue material are the responsibility of the LEA. Local law enforcement should prioritize their resources for local concerns that build community trust instead of doing ICE's job for them. Then there is the cost of [litigation](#) that can arise from racial profiling such as the Frederick County case involving [Sara Medrano](#).

Maryland law enforcement should focus on making our communities safer instead of implementing policies which destroy trust. Knowing that our local law enforcement is leveraging the intimate knowledge they have of our local communities to carry out the federal immigration enforcement agenda only serves to weaken our state as a whole. It tears at the very fabric of our communities, valuing expediency over the due process of law and the human dignity of our neighbors. 287(g) now, more than ever, is complicit in the violence and terror caused by immigration enforcement. We have already seen how the lack of due process has resulted in a [Maryland man](#) with withholding of removal status, married to a U.S. citizen, and with a U.S. citizen child was, through an “administrative error,” sent to the [Terrorist Confinement Center](#) in El Salvador.

Maryland LEAs with 287(g) agreements need to recognize that ICE is not the community they serve. The communities very much include our immigrant and refugee neighbors who have called

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Maryland home for years. Protect them, protect us. Stop diverting important resources away from our communities.

We need to aim for a future that upholds the dignity of everyone, welcomes the stranger, and is fueled by hope and kindness, not fear.

For additional resources, contact Viviana Westbrook at stateandlocaladvocacy@cliniclegal.org.

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