



Editorial Board Meetings

You arrange an editorial board meeting by calling the newspaper and asking for the person in charge of arranging editorial board meetings. You then make your “pitch” as to why you would like to meet with the editors.

Editorials are written around current events so timing is a factor.

- Review the tips for getting a letter to the editor accepted as most apply to getting a meeting with the editorial board.
- Call a few weeks in advance as the editorial calendar can fill up quickly.

If you do meet with the editors expect one of three outcomes:

- A reporter will write an article
- An editorial will be written on your issue either agreeing or disagreeing with your perspective.
- Nothing

The more you know about the inner workings of these boards, the better your chances of winning a meeting with the writers and convincing them that your opinion is the right one.

Editorial Writers Work Like Reporters

Editorial boards and their writers work a lot like news departments at the rest of the newspaper. Writers frequently have specific beats (like politics, the environment etc.) and are responsible for writing the editorials.

Typically, the writer will decide what position the paper should take on a given issue, and present this position in a daily staff meeting. If the rest of the board thinks the stance sounds logical (based on the writer’s arguments) the writer gets the go-ahead to write the editorial.

You want to make sure that when an issue starts to heat up, the appropriate writer knows of your keen interest and will solicit your input before an editorial gets written.

Build the relationship by sending the editorial writer fact sheets that explain the issues, and show how the community is affected. Include phone numbers of key spokespeople. The more specific you make the issue, the better your chances of getting before the board.

Don’t suggest a meeting with board members just to introduce yourself. Time before the editorial board is limited; don’t waste it.

Tips to Help Your Cause

- **Don’t demand to meet with the entire board.** You’ll probably meet with one or two writers who are specialists on the subject at hand.
- **Expect a beat reporter to attend the meeting and ask most of the questions.** Editorial writers depend on newsroom staff to fill them in on news events surrounding a local hot issue.
- **Let your representative know that a reporter may write a story about your meeting,** or use a portion of the discussion in some relevant news story. A meeting with editorial writers is not a private matter.
- **Be prepared to field any and all questions.** Just because you’ve requested a meeting to talk about the impacts of I-864 doesn’t mean a writer won’t query you about your city’s personnel issues.
- **Don’t be surprised if community members sit in on your meeting and ask questions.** As newspapers embrace what’s called “public journalism” or methods of getting closer to their readers, editorial boards are inviting local citizens to join in on meetings. These folks might ask you off-the-wall or unsophisticated questions, which is exactly what the board members hope for.

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- **Find out who'll be in the room with you and the board members.** Call the writer or board secretary a couple of days before your meeting and ask if reporters or community members will be present.
- **Designate a single spokesperson.** If you have too many speakers your message will get cluttered or diffused.
- **Be sure you already know what the paper has written previously on this issue,** and if they have taken a stand.
- **Practice responding to potential questions** before the meeting.
- **Read the paper** the day of the meeting.
- **Opening statements should be limited to no more than three-five minutes.** Quickly summarize your opposition on the issue, supporting evidence, and anticipate and adequately address your opposition's criticisms. Then let the editorial board ask questions.
- **Don't be surprised if the board plays devil's advocate.** They need to test the validity of your opinion.
- **Don't give ammo to the other side.** Stick to your position. Don't help opponents by bringing up their side of the story.
- **Make a point of asking the writers to back your cause.** Tell the editorial board that you would appreciate the paper's support.
- **Don't expect the board to change its mind.** Once a board has published an opinion, they don't want to backpedal. However, you can certainly request a meeting after an offending editorial has been published, and discuss other methods for getting your viewpoint in print; for instance, an op-ed or letter to the editor.

