

National Workforce Day of Action

Op-Ed Toolkit

March 2011

Writing Your Op-Ed

- **Get to the point.** The first sentence should be 12 words or less summarizing what's at stake. One of the biggest mistakes in op-ed writing is using the first paragraph (or the entire op-ed) to build to the point. Most editors read 2-3 sentences before making a decision to go on.
- **Who is often more important than what.** Op-eds can have more impact—and a greater chance of publication—if you have the right people listed as authors. In the current battle, the voices of employers are crucial. Consider having industry partners submit your op-ed. Having an op-ed co-signed by business and labor representatives packs a particularly good punch.
- **Mind your word count.** Check the op-ed guidelines for the paper you are targeting. If they give a word count, follow it. If they don't, 750 is generally considered the maximum length. Many papers will not consider op-eds over their word count. If the paper accepts your op-ed and edits it to meet their guidelines, you'll have no control over what they cut.
- **Make it relevant and accessible.** We've provided sample language but it's essential that you tailor your submission with local examples of impact. It's also essential to avoid workforce jargon and acronyms.
- **Learn from others.** A number of outstanding op-eds have been published over the last month in response to proposed elimination of workforce funding. Visit [NSC's website](#) to read some of these or [follow us on Twitter](#) to get notices of workforce development stories in the media.

Submitting Your Op-Ed

Many newspapers have specific format requirements, so please check the paper's web site before submitting. Always include full contact information for the author(s).

- **Road rules.** In general, if you have multiple papers in one media market, you cannot submit the same op-ed to more than one paper at a time. Submit to one and if it gets rejected, submit it to the other outlet. This applies to national outlets as well. If you are submitting to different markets throughout your state (but not within the same city), you can typically submit to all papers at once. That said, some papers will have it in their guidelines that you cannot submit anything that has been submitted to another paper.
- **Follow up.** Once you have submitted the op-ed, you can follow up with a call 24 hours later to pitch the piece and find out if it will be printed.



Op-Ed Writing Points

Opening

- Amidst [your state's unemployment rate] unemployment, employers in [City or State] cannot find workers with the right technical skills to fill waiting jobs.
- Instead of trying to address this challenge and put more people back to work, last month, the House of Representatives passed an appropriations bill that would eliminate funding for the primary federal program that give workers the skills they need to fill these jobs. The bill targeted other vital training programs for deep cuts or elimination.
- We applaud Representative [Name] for his/her willingness to stand up for the workers and businesses of [City or Region] with his/her vote against HR1.

OR

We are disappointed that Representative [Name] chose to undermine efforts to put more people in our state back to work with his/her vote in support of HR1.

(Click [here](#) to see how Members voted.)

Impact

- This past year, the U.S. Workforce Investment (WIA) system served over 8.4 million jobseekers, helped over 4.3 million get jobs, and placed hundreds of thousands into education and training to prepare them for new careers. WIA participation rates increased 234 percent over the past two years despite funding remaining stagnant at 2008 levels. *If available, customize this paragraph with your state's data—data for some states is available [here](#). Or select other impact facts from the Workforce Day of Action [memo](#).*
- *Personalize the data. Briefly tell the story of a highly successful program in your local area and what's at risk if funding is cut. If possible, put it in the context of the impact on individual workers, employers, and the local economy.*

Closing

- Workforce development programs are an important part of the nation's economic recovery and job creation effort—working with employers to train workers for existing and emerging high-demand jobs. If federal investments in these programs are eliminated, the impact will be devastating to our fragile economy as it is still slowly getting back on its feet.
- Congress must focus on strengthening, not eliminating, our country's workforce development efforts.