

Tips for submitting opinion pieces to local newspapers

We have provided you with a completed opinion piece that we hope you will submit under your name to the newspaper(s) in your area that we have identified. This piece is ready to submit and is designed to increase public support for efforts to bring more locally produced fresh fruits and vegetables to the state's public schools and to increase the availability of healthy food in parts of the state that are underserved by grocery stores. Our ultimate purpose is to encourage this session of the New Mexico legislature to pass the bills that would accomplish these goals.

We are asking you to submit this piece immediately. The New Mexico legislature only meets until Feb. 15th this year, which means we have very little time to influence their thinking. Newspapers often take several days, sometimes a week or more, before they run a piece like this. So time is of the essence.

You are welcome to modify the piece to either fit your style or include a local fact or two that you think "brings the story home" to you area or community. But there are a couple of limitations: we must keep the essential points about health and the benefits to the community, children and farmers in the piece. We can't make this piece any longer than it is. It is now about 600 words, which is the maximum for any opinion piece in a New Mexico newspaper.

But if you're satisfied with the piece as it currently reads, please put your name under the title and submit it as quickly as possible by email. When you submit the piece you should include your contact information: name, address, email, phone. If you haven't received a response from the editor within two business days, give them a call. Tell them how important this is and how timely (the bills are now before the legislature) and encourage them to run it as soon as they have space.

They may ask you to modify it. The most likely reason would be length. Some newspapers just don't have room for opinion pieces this long, but they are apt to run it as a "letter-to-the-editor" which may only be 200 words. If you don't feel comfortable cutting this piece down, please be in touch with us and we will help you immediately. Be persistent and passionate, but if the editor just plain says no, then say thank you and ask them to please consider you in the future.

We are extremely grateful for your willingness to do this. Getting the kind of public attention that only newspapers can muster is so important to the work of making healthy and locally grown food available to all.

Thank you.