Ratify the Equal Rights Amendment Toolkit:

Information Brief: Three-State Strategy ......................... 2
Information Brief: Start Over Strategy .......................... 3
Action Brief: Three-State Strategy ............................. 4
Action Brief: Start Over Strategy ............................. 5
Phone Script: Three-State ERA (Federal) ....................... 6
Phone Script: Three-State ERA (State) ....................... 7
Social Media Toolkit: ERA for Facebook & Twitter ...... 8
NOW Lobby Guide ..................................... 13
How to Write An Op-Ed ................................... 16
How to Write a LTE ..................................... 19
INFO BRIEF
The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA): A Three-State Strategy

Overview
The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) ensures that gender equity is codified in the United States Constitution. Though passed by Congress in 1972, and ratified by 35 of the 38 States necessary for constitutional passage, the deadline for ratification passed in 1982. S.J. Res. 5 and H.J. Res. 53 seek to enact a new timeline that allows the ERA to still be eligible for ratification.

Why the Need for an ERA?
Equality in pay, job opportunities, political structure, education, health care including reproductive health care, and education—in particular for women of color, women with disabilities and the LGBTQIA community—will remain an elusive dream without a guarantee in the U.S. Constitution. The progress we have made—and must continue to make—towards women’s equality can be lost at any time because those advances depend on legislation that can be (and has been) weakened or repealed by Congress. Given the current political climate, this is more of a concern than ever.

Precedent for Extended Ratification Process in the Three State Strategy
In 1992, the 27th Amendment was ratified more than 203 years after its 1789 passage by Congress. This established a precedent for the three-state strategy. If S.J. Res. 5 and H.J. Res. 53 are passed, the existing 35 state ratifications would still be in effect, and only three additional states would be needed to successfully ratify the ERA.

Three-State Strategy Approach
With 35 states already ratified, ERA activists can focus on Virginia, Illinois, North Carolina, Florida, and Nevada. These target states present strategic opportunities based on prior attempts at ratification, current political representation, upcoming elections, and state legislature party composition.

Current Status
- Illinois: On May 22, 2014, the State Legislature Voted to Ratify the ERA with a tally of 39 to 11, failing to meet the ⅔ majority required for state ratification.
- Virginia: On January 26 2016, The ERA passed in the Virginia Senate 21 to 19, failing to meet the ⅔ majority required for state ratification.
- North Carolina: On February 14, 2017, the ERA was introduced in both houses of the General Assembly as Senate Bill 85 (S85) and House Bill 102 (H102).

NOW’s Action Agenda
- U.S. Senators should co-sponsor and vote yes on S.J. Res. 5.
- U.S. Representatives should co-sponsor and vote yes on H.J. Res. 53.

Sources
NOW Urges That:

- U.S. Senators co-sponsor and vote yes on S.J. Res. 5, which is a joint resolution removing the deadline for the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment.
- U.S. Representatives co-sponsor and vote yes on H.J. Res. 53 which also removes the deadline for the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment.

Overview

The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) ensures that gender equity is codified in the United States Constitution. Though passed by Congress in 1972, and ratified by 35 of the 38 States necessary for passage; the deadline for ratification passed in 1982. S.J. Res. 5 and H.J. Res. 53 seek to enact a new timeline that allows for the ERA to be eligible for ratification.

Precedent For Extended Ratification Process: The Three-State Strategy

In 1992 the 27th Amendment was ratified, more than 203 years after its 1789 passage by Congress. This established a precedent for the three state strategy. If S.J. Res. 5 and H.J. Res. 53 are passed, the existing 35 state ratifications would still be in effect, and only three additional states would be needed to successfully pass the ERA.

With the 35 current states, ERA activists in unratified states continue to clear a path for passage, with a focus on Virginia, Illinois, North Carolina, Florida, and Nevada.

- These target-states present strategic opportunities in terms of prior attempts at ratification, political representation, and state legislature party-composition.

Support For Gender Equity Is Widely Supported In The United States

An April 2012 poll for Daily Kos and Service Employees International Union (SEIU) found that 91% of Americans believe that men and women should have equal rights affirmed by the Constitution. A 2001 Opinion Research Corporation poll showed that 72% of the respondents mistakenly assume that the Constitution already includes such a guarantee.

An Inclusive Interpretation of the ERA

NOW is committed to advocating for an inclusive and intersectional ERA interpretation that includes equitable access to all aspects of reproductive health care and centers marginalized people, including LGBTQIA individuals, immigrants, women of color, and women with disabilities. We believe the broad language of the 1972 text (“Equality of rights under the law shall not be abridged … on account of sex”) lends itself to this broad and inclusive interpretation.

Sources
4 See 3.
Hello, my name is [name] and my zip code is [zip code].

As a constituent, I am calling to express my concern with the current state of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). Although passed by both the Senate and the House in 1972, the Equal Rights Amendment has not been ratified and added to the United States Constitution. Currently, we need three additional states to reach the three-fourths threshold. Without the ERA there is no guarantee of constitutional gender equality. Therefore, I am reaching out to ask that [name of Congress person] revisit the ERA as a topic of extreme importance.

In the current political environment, it is more important than ever to champion women’s rights. American citizens across the country are impassioned after the hateful rhetoric that dominated the election cycle, much of which was aimed at women.

Women will not be equal in this country until our rights are solidified with the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. With the passage of S.J. Res. 5 and H.J. Res. 53, the ratification deadline for the ERA would be removed, allowing for three final states to make it a reality. With the example recently set by Nevada, now is the time to secure the fight for the ERA! I represent many women in our (name of state/ district) that want the ERA to pass. Generations of women have fought for the ERA, it’s time to stand with them.

If you are concerned about women’s equality, will you commit to supporting and co-sponsoring S.J. Res. 5 and H.J. Res. 53 removing the deadline and allowing for the final three states to be ratified?

Thank you for your time, do you need any more information from me?
Hello, my name is [name] and my zip code is [zip code].

As a constituent, I am calling to express my concern with the current state of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). Although passed by both the Senate and the House in 1972, the Equal Rights Amendment has not been ratified and added to the United States Constitution. Currently, we need three additional states to reach the three-fourths threshold. Our state is one of those that has yet to ratify the ERA. Without it, there is no guarantee of constitutional gender equality. Therefore, I am reaching out to ask that [name of Congress person] revisit the ERA as a topic of dire importance.

In the current political environment, it is more important than ever to champion women’s rights. American citizens across the country are impassioned after the hateful rhetoric that dominated the election cycle, much of which was aimed at women. With the example set by the ratification of the ERA in Nevada, now is the time to secure this legislation in our state.

Women will not be equal in this country until our rights are solidified with the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. Our state needs to play its important role in the process. I represent many women in our state that want the ERA to pass. Generations of women have fought for the ERA, it’s time to stand with them.

If you are concerned about women’s equality, will you commit to supporting and co-sponsoring the ERA in our State’s legislature?

Thank you for your time, do you need any more information from me?
INFO BRIEF
The Equal Rights Amendment: A “Start-Over Strategy”

Overview
The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) ensures that gender equity is codified in the United States Constitution. Though passed by Congress in 1972, the ERA was ratified by 35 of the 38 States necessary for passage; the deadline for ratification passed 1982. S.J. Res. 6 and H.J. Res. 33 seek to reintroduce the ERA as a proposed amendment to the United States Constitution; this would restart the ratification process.

The Start-Over Strategy
- This strategy reintroduces the ERA in the 115th Congress as the 28th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.
- This reintroduction would effectively “start over” the congressional passage and state ratification process.

Benefits of the Start-Over Strategy
- New ERA language can be reframed with an explicitly inclusive lens to encompass race, sexual orientation, economic justice and reproductive justice, calling a more diverse coalition of feminists and their allies into the struggle for justice and equality for all.
- The start-over strategy reflects a more traditional, (thus more straightforward) process than the three state-strategy.
- Each state has the opportunity to pass and ratify the ERA, allowing each constituent, state, and representative to have a stake in new legislation.

An Inclusive ERA
NOW is committed to advocating for an inclusive and intersectional ERA interpretation that includes equitable access to all aspects of women’s reproductive health care and centers marginalized people including LGBTQIA individuals, immigrants, women of color, and women with disabilities. The start-over strategy would allow this inclusion to be stated explicitly. An inclusive ERA would include, among other things:
- A clear and strict legal standard for deciding cases of sex discrimination, including discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender nonconforming presentation.
- A basis for litigation and legislation to fight back against the gender and gender-race wage gaps, and to ensure paid family leave, rights for pregnant workers, and other workplace issues impacting women generally and/or specific communities of women.
- Explicit recognition of women’s constitutional right to make their own reproductive decisions.

NOW’s Action Agenda
- U.S. Senators should co-sponsor and vote yes on S.J. Res. 6, and support all legislation that uplifts women’s constitutional equity.
- U.S. Representatives should co-sponsor and vote yes on H.J. Res. 33 and support all legislation that uplifts women’s constitutional equity.

Sources
NOW Urges That:

- U.S. Senators cosponsor and vote yes on S.J. Res. 6, which is a joint resolution proposing a constitutional amendment prohibiting the United States or any state from denying or abridging equal rights under the law on account of sex.
- U.S. Representatives co-sponsor and vote yes on H.J. Res. 33 which is a joint resolution proposing a constitutional amendment declaring that women shall have equal rights and prohibiting the U.S. or any state from denying or abridging equal rights under the law on account of sex.

Overview
The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) ensures that gender equity is codified in the United States Constitution. Though passed by Congress in 1972, and ratified by 35 of the 38 States necessary for passage; the deadline for ratification passed in 1982. S.J. Res. 6 and H.J. Res. 33 seek to reintroduce the ERA as a proposed amendment to the United States Constitution, effectively restarting the ratification process.

Why the Need for an ERA?
Equality in pay, job opportunities, political structure, education, health care including reproductive health care, and education--in particular for women of color, women with disabilities and the LGBTQIA community--will remain an elusive dream without a guarantee in the U.S. Constitution. The progress we have made—and must continue to make—towards women’s equality can be lost at any time because those advances depend on legislation that can be (and has been) weakened or repealed by Congress. Given the current political climate, this is more of a concern than ever.

Support For Gender Equity Is Widely Supported In The United States
An April 2012 poll for Daily Kos and Service Employees International Union (SEIU) found that 91% of Americans believe that men and women should have equal rights affirmed by the Constitution. A 2001 Opinion Research Corporation poll showed that 72% of the respondents mistakenly assumed that the Constitution already includes such a guarantee.

It is imperative that the rights of all women are once and for all protected by the United States Constitution.

Sources
Social Media Toolkit: Ratify the Equal Rights Amendment

The Women’s March, Black Lives Matter, DAPL, Occupy: What do these movements have in common? They all started in the digital world.

Why is online activism important?

Often, people dismiss social media and its’ importance in social justice movements. However, over the past 20 years, studies have found that social media is a unique tool that allows people to connect, learn, and mobilize at an unprecedented rate. Here are a few reasons why:

1. Social media helps link people from all over the world who are dedicated to the same causes, building a community made up of a variety of ideas, narratives, and experiences.

2. It has the power to educate many people at once and connect them to resources they might not otherwise find.

3. It can enhance our offline activism, creating a foundation and jumping-off point for ‘on the ground’ action.
4 Ways to Enhance Your Online Activism

1. Quality, not Quantity
   While there’s something to be said for saturating people’s timelines with news you care about, the quality of your posts is far more important. Make your posts meaningful by retrieving your information from reputable sources. Attach relevant videos, articles, and graphics to captivate readers, and make sure your posts are well-written and free of grammatical errors.

2. Engage in (Informed) Disagreement...
   Conversing with people who hold opposing views is healthy and sometimes even productive! It forces us (and others) to consider, defend, and reevaluate our beliefs. However, when voicing your opinions with people on the internet, keep the conversation respectful. Stick to the facts, refrain from name-calling, and see your position through.

3. ...But, Remember to Pick Your Battles
   Although it can be productive to engage in healthy discussions, sometimes it just isn’t worth it. Consider the level of influence you have over the person you’re trying to debate. Offer to speak offline with someone about an issue you feel particularly passionate about if it feels appropriate for the situation.

Note for 2 & 3: The current cultural climate has bred an increased uptick in aggressive rhetoric in digital spaces. If you are feeling unsafe in a particular space or with a particular user, please do not hesitate to disengage and block that person/user.

4. Collaborate and Connect with Others
   Pooling your resources with like-minded groups can make your movement that much stronger. Don’t let your hashtags disappear into oblivion; work with local activists to expand your movement into different communities.
How to Use Facebook Live

For newcomers to this feature of Facebook, here are a few simple steps for Facebook Live use and best practices.

NOTE: You can only go live on Facebook through Facebook’s iOS (IPhone, IPad) app or Android (Galaxy, Notebook, etc) app. Facebook Live is not applicable through desktop computers or laptops.

Step 1: Download the Facebook App on your IPhone or Android phone:

Step 2: Once it is downloaded and you have logged in under your NOW profile, go to the top of your News Feeds. Tap ‘What’s On Your Mind?’

Step 3: Tap Live Video.

Step 4: Write a description of your broadcast (using the aforementioned guidelines).

Step 5: Tap Go Live to begin.

Step 6: Tap Finish when you want your video to end.

In order to film an event such as a panel discussion, an interview or a conference, it is suggested the person use an IPad rather than a cellular phone. For events such as these, the same rules apply, however, make sure your front facing camera (the camera used to take selfies) is in use. Using an IPad also affords you the ability to set it up on a docking station and let it record as you are live.
Ratify the Equal Rights Amendment Facebook Guide

NOW has made ratifying the ERA a top priority for decades. The National Action Program has identified several areas of focus for the campaign:

- Pursue a three-state strategy to ratify the ERA.
- Pursue a start-over strategy to ratify the ERA.
- Advocate for an inclusive and intersectional ERA interpretation that includes equitable access to all aspects of reproductive health care and centers marginalized people, including LGBTQIA individuals, immigrants, women of color, and women with disabilities.
- Educate and inspire women—particularly a younger generation of women—as to why the ERA is still so important.

NOW’s National Action Program is also excited to announce the creation of a Visions for Equality campaign. This initiative asks young women to paint their own unique vision of equality as a creative method and interpretation of gender equity in America. We ask that you:

- Share blogs and posts from Visions for Equality
- Submit your own blog content with Visions for Equality and share it on Facebook.
- Express your Vision for Equality on your Facebook page

Ratify the ERA: Facebook Examples

- Shocking Statistic: Over 72% of people think that the ERA is already a part of the constitution. Want to informed on the real facts? Join us at our weekly ERA info session and learn about your rights! Info in the link below:

- The ERA was just approved by Nevada Senate Committee! Nevada constituents: Call you representatives now and tell them how much the ERA means to you! Details on what to say in the link below:
- Nevada is on its way to ratifying the ERA! Call your legislator to tell them how the ERA fits into your vision of equality! Details Below:

- In North Carolina, an organization just posted a billboard proclaiming women don’t want equal rights. This is why we NEED the ERA: http://bit.ly/2IAsyC8

- Author, Doug Parry wrote an op-ed of the merits of the ERA in 2017. Sound off below and give us your thoughts on what the ERA means to you! http://bit.ly/2mmbBK3

- To make the ERA an amendment in the Constitution, we currently need three more states to approve it. To find out more about the three-state strategy, click on the link below!

- The ERA is one of the only documents that provides gender equity for women. This includes wages, labor, job discrimination, and education. Place the ask here.

- North Carolina just introduced the ERA in House Bill 102 and Senate Bill 85. Call your representatives and let them know how much you care.

- In 2017, women are still disproportionately affected by issues of class and income. Women make up the majority of minimum wage workers, yet 22 states have a minimum wage that is less that $8. Supporting the ERA is a promise to make sure women are compensated adequately for their labor.

- When we look at the gender wage gap, we see that Black and Latino women bear the burden of that gap. For every $1 a White man makes Black women make 64 cent. For every $1 a White man makes, Latinas make 54 cent. Let’s support fair wages and in turn, support women of color.
• Domestic violence is an issue that often goes ignored. The ERA guarantees that the perpetrators of domestic violence will be punished to the full extent of the law. This is why we need the ERA.

• The ERA touches so many issues of gender disparity. From fair wages to support of birth control. Let’s make sure that the ratification of the ERA does not disappear from the agenda.

• The ERA was just ratified in Nevada. While we celebrate this victory, we must continue to advocate for its ratification across the country. We are not done yet.

Ratify the Equal Rights Amendment Twitter Guide

Did you know that 72% of Americans already believe an Equal Rights Amendment is a part of the Constitution? We need to raise awareness about the fact that women in this country still don’t have constitutional equality, and why that’s so important—for all women! We ask that you:

• Educate the general public on what the ERA is, its capabilities, and why it matters
  o This includes the history of the ERA
  o Fact tweets on the ERA
  o How the ERA protects women
  o The full breadth of the ERA and its potential in sectors of education, economics, and social justice

NOW’s National Action Program is also excited to announce the creation of Visions for Equality! This initiative asks young women to paint their own unique vision of equality as a creative method and interpretation of gender equity in America. We ask that supporters:

• Tweet under the hashtag #Visions4Equality
• Post your vision of equality in the future
• Retweet about our website and encourage others to join

See our Resources for the ERA campaign on NOW.org for more information!

Ratify the ERA: Twitter Examples

• Why We Need The ERA: Because our Congress is now controlled by a bunch of ‘white, rich misogynists’ http://bit.ly/2ltxgid

• Women are slowly breaking down the gender barriers in different fields of industry http://bit.ly/2kYPhb5

• The last national women’s strike led to the passing of the ERA, can we do it again? #WomensStrike

• Go Nevada!! NV Senate Committee just passed the Equal Rights Amendment

• On not passing the ERA: “It normalizes misogyny and moderates the collective cognitive difference related to universal equality” Pat Spearman is all of us

• Only 23 states provide constitutional protection from sex discrimination. We must ratify the ERA to extend those rights to everyone.

• Scary: 72% of Americans believe that the ERA is already a part of the Constitution. News brief: It’s Not.

• The ERA is the only piece of federal legislation that guarantees all women are treated equally. Find out more here: link to educational resources
• The gender wage gap affects Black and Latina women more than any other group.

• Did you know that women in computing are paid only 87% of what their male counterparts are paid? Ratifying the ERA would change that.

• Gender disparities exist everywhere: Nationally, women receive $300 less in social security than men.

• Unacceptable: The minimum wage in 22 is below $8. Do you who most minimum wage workers are? Women.

• So Nevada just ratified the ERA...Virginia, it's your turn.

• The ERA has not been ratified since 1982 and Nevada just did it in less than three weeks. Do you see what happens when our legislatures actually work to protect our rights?!

**Visions for Equality**

• My vision of equality is a world that values the lives of Black women.

• In my vision for equality, reproductive rights are not a luxury but a right.

• In my Vision for Equality, women are being paid a living wage that provides for themselves and their families.
Lobby Guide
NOW Recommendations

What is Lobbying?
Lobbying is any act that seeks to hold a group, government official, or elected representative accountable. **Speaking truth to power allows for individuals to become stakeholders in the lawmaking process.** Whether on a local, state, or federal level, if your group wants to shape legislative change, lobbying is the most effective tool in your arsenal.

Ladder of Engagement:
The ladder of engagement illustrates tiers of lobbying. This visual gauges which method of lobbying is most effective for your group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tier 5: Facilitate In-Person Lobby Meetings.</th>
<th>Meeting with your elected official or their staff puts a face to your issue. This more traditional form of accountability helps to build relationships and facilitates a conversation about your advocacy.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tier 4: Make Phone Calls.</td>
<td>Calling your elected officials allows for a conversation with staffers about a specific bill or cause. Staffers logs comments in a data system that gauges constituent opinions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier 3: Write to Elected Officials.</td>
<td>By writing to your elected officials, constituents are able to articulate their viewpoints in a concise and impactful way. Staffers skim these letters and log the main points in a system that tracks constituent opinion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier 2: Post on Social Media.</td>
<td>Tweets and Facebook Posts hold lawmakers accountable on a public forum. Government officials care about how they are perceived; if enough noise is made on social media, they may be forced to reevaluate their position.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier 1: Sign a Petition.</td>
<td>This is a low barrier way for activists to engage in issues. By stating your support in writing, staffers log opinions and pass along data to the elected official.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ABCs of Effective Lobbying:

**Accurate**
- All information given to staffers must be factually correct, this is important in terms of legitimacy and ethics.
  - If you are not aware of a fact or the answer to a question, let the staffer know and follow up after the meeting.

**Brief**
- Staffers typically have packed schedules. They are taking time out of their days to have a conversation with you, make sure that your talking points are brief and focused.
- 

**Courteous**
- Though you might not always agree with a staffer or elected official, it is important to remain professional; you might be able to lean on this connection to make progress on another initiative.
Other Tips to Keep in Mind:

- **Numbers Make a Difference.** Engage as many activists as possible in your lobby initiatives, the more individuals that are involved in your lobby actions, the more impactful.

- **Keep Lobby Advocacy within your State or Represented Region.** Though it might seem impactful to reach out to Senators and Representatives from other districts or states, it is not within their purview to record opinions from individuals who are not their constituents.

- **Stay focused on One or Two Issues.** Staffers will most likely only take time to follow up or report the main points. In order to make an impact, focus and narrow your lobby effort on one to two issues.

- **Be Clear About What You Want: Make an Ask.** Clearly relay exactly what you want your elected official to do after the meeting (Vote YES on SB 0000).

Breaking Down Lobby Myths:

- **Meeting with elected officials or their staff is not impactful.** Though expecting direct and immediate change from lobbying might not be realistic, over time your actions stand to make a difference. When lobbying, think of your role as an educator and a relationship builder, supporting elected officials in their role of understanding constituent views of policy impact.

- **Lobbying is unethical and requires a highly funded operation.** Though constituents might think of lobbying as mechanism of highly funded special interest groups, grassroots lobbying amplifies voices and centers constituent opinion in the policy making process.

- **Lobby meetings are intimidating.** Though it can be nerve-wracking to speak truth to power, it is a large part of staffers’ jobs to meet with constituents. Staffers have thousands of bills and memos that cross their desks, they rely on you as issue experts to narrow this pile and better understand the issues.

- **Lobbying has to take place in Washington D.C.** Though lobby meetings often take place on Capitol Hill, elected officials maintain offices across their represented region. Meeting with staffers in their local office puts a face and a name to issues impacting local constituencies.
How To Write An Op-Ed

What is an Op-Ed?
An Op-ed is a strong and informed opinion column about a specific topic or subject. An op-ed can have a targeted audience or can be written for the general public. Op-eds are usually written by organizations, activists, experts, opinion leaders, or private citizens. The goal of an op-ed is to present a clear and dynamic opinion on an issue that has the capability to inform and engage the reader.

Dos & Don'ts For Op-Eds

**Do stay on message.** Before you begin to write, please identify why you are crafting this op-ed. What topic area are you focusing on, why does it matter to you, and who is your targeted audience? The answers to these questions will help inform your writing.

**Do know your intended outlet.** Every news outlet has a different voice, different demographics, and different guidelines around op-eds. Please familiarize yourself with the outlet’s rules before you send them your material.

**Do use your own voice and narratives.** Your experiences with an issue--immigration, abortion, sex abuse--are important and critical. These personal narratives appeals to audiences, please include that in your op-ed.

**Do focus your Op-Ed.** Because many of our issues and campaigns are quite broad, it is easy to talk about everything at once. Focus your op-ed on one issue and make sure that you are covering it thoroughly.

**Do grab their attention immediately.** An attention grabbing opening is the best way to get someone to continue to read. Place emphasis on the first three sentences of your op-ed to set the narrative and to grab the spotlight.

**Do know and state the facts.** Your opinion is important, but having statistical evidence to support your opinions is critical in formulating a cohesive op-ed. Please make sure that within your column, you are citing relevant facts and stats that drive your point home.

**Do bring in topical events and issues.** Many of NOW’s issue areas and campaigns transcend time. However, it is important to incorporate relevant material. This increases the chances of your op-ed being chosen.

**Do use universal language.** Writing an op-ed is not the same as writing an academic paper. Most newspaper articles are written on an 8th grade reading level. Attempt to take very high brow concepts and make them palatable and understandable to all audiences.

**Do keep it concise.** An op-ed should be between 500 and 1000 words. Make sure that every word counts.

**Don’t forget to edit your own work.** You are your harshest critic; make sure that what you send out is the best representation of your writing skills.
Elements of a Good Op-ed for Activists

A) A Strong Introduction: An Introduction that Introduces the Topic, the Issue, and Your Voice.

*New York Times, 3/14/12, “Why I Am Leaving Goldman Sachs”:*

“Today is my last day at Goldman Sachs. After almost 12 years at the firm — first as a summer intern while at Stanford, then in New York for 10 years, and now in London — I believe I have worked here long enough to understand the trajectory of its culture, its people and its identity. And I can honestly say that the environment now is as toxic and destructive as I have ever seen it.”

*Why It Works:* It sets the tone of the piece, introduces the author, his perspective, and what he will spend the rest of the column discussing. It is also highly provocative, due to the relatively insular nature of the industry he is writing about. His candor draws you in.


“An old love song speaks of “the little ordinary things that everyone ought to do.” That phrase used to cover instructions such as: “Take out the trash,” “brush your teeth,” “close cover before striking,” “look both ways before crossing.” Ordinary things.

9/11 changed all that.

Now “things that everyone ought to do” include “remove your shoes” and “leave liquids at home.” And “little ordinary things” involve pat-downs, full-body scans, concrete planters in front of buildings and the horror of the unattended package. No more “none of your business.” Now it’s “see something, say something.” All the ordinary things of our day.

*Why It Works:* It is dramatic and captivating, using two juxtaposing images to set up the rest of the column. It crafts a specific narrative that places readers in a mindset to ask, ‘What is normal?’

B) Strong Facts and Statistics About An Issue:

*New York Times, 8/30/16, “We Need Abortion Laws Based On Science”:

“...Not only is the law misguided; it also led to worse outcomes for women’s health. We examined medical charts from almost 3,000 patients at four Ohio clinics getting medication abortions before and after the law. After the law, the percentage of patients requiring additional medical treatment rose from 5 percent to 14 percent — including, in some cases, an in-clinic procedure to complete the abortion, which is what many women were trying to avoid by opting for a medication abortion in the first place.

The four clinics we studied saw an 80 percent decline in medication abortions between 2010 and 2014, compared with a 17 percent decline in all abortions over the same time period. Medication abortions declined from 22 percent of all abortions in these clinics in 2010, before the law, to 5 percent after the law in 2014.”

*Why it Works:* The facts presented in this op-ed are not simply facts derived from the internet, they are facts from a study performed by the writer. They give validity to the author’s argument and lend authority to her voice.

*Cosmopolitan, 2/21/17, “Our Laws Period-Shame Women--So I’m Going To Change Them”:

“...You would not believe what female inmates go through to access menstrual hygiene products. The ACLU of Michigan filed a federal lawsuit on behalf of eight female prisoners at Muskegon County Jail because (among other things) the prison denied inmates access to menstrual hygiene products, a condition considered inhumane and degrading. Female inmates in Connecticut only get five pads per week to split with their bunkmate, which means they may have to use a single pad for multiple days. I cannot imagine how humiliating that must feel. My bill would require each state to give female inmates and detainees as many tampons or pads as they need, whenever they need them — at no cost.

*Why it Works:* This op-ed, by elected official Grace Meng, presents the facts in a storytelling fashion. She does not use literal facts and figures, yet she gets the point across by providing different types of examples of the same story.
C) A Clear and Concise Declaration of the Author’s Opinion Regarding the Issue

*Washington Post*, 10/22/15, “Make College Free For All”:

“In my view, education is essential for personal and national well-being. We live in a highly competitive, global economy, and if our economy is to be strong, we need the best-educated workforce in the world. We won’t achieve that if, every year, hundreds of thousands of bright young people cannot afford to go to college while millions more leave school deeply in debt. We need to ensure that every young person in this country who wishes to go to college can get the education that he or she desires, without going into debt and regardless of his or her family’s income.”

**Why It Works:** The author of this piece very directly and clearly states his support for free college and articulates why free college is necessary. Going into anecdotal details, the author quickly points to a myriad of points about the need for free college and what he believes the result would be.

*Teen Vogue*, 2/1/17, “I Am A Priest, and I Am Pro-Choice”:

And that is where the Church can find its point of entry: in offering people making these decisions every measure of mercy they need to live wise and whole lives. It is the act of looking people in the eye and saying, “I trust you. I love you,” not, “My personal religious convictions on this matter should prevent you from seeking out the affordable, safe health care that you need.” This act leads people of faith and goodwill to seek out ways in which we can support and elevate organizations that offer life-saving reproductive health care and education to people of all ages, races, socio-economic levels, sexual orientations, and gender identities, especially organizations like Planned Parenthood and SisterReach.

**Why It Works:** The author of this piece uses his own identity as a priest to situate his opinion on abortion. He also makes a statement on what he feels the relationship between the very religious and abortion should look like. Finally, he takes careful time to uplift other organizations doing the work.

D) A Personal Anecdote That Grounds The Story and Gives Validity to the Author

*Vice*, 2/8/17, “How Trump's Travel Ban Hurts Iranian Americans Like Me”:

“As a high school senior in California, I lived through the events of the 1979 Iranian Revolution and the hostage crisis. For many Americans of Iranian heritage—and especially those who, unlike me, immigrated in the early days of the revolution and the Iran-Iraq War—those events were psychologically scarring and left them feeling between worlds. While I was too young to understand the politics of the fissure between Iran and the US and the reasons for the hostage crisis, I saw clearly how easily the media and Americans' global ignorance could result in vindictive rhetoric and for some even calling for the "nuking of Iran.”

**Why it Works:** the author’s exploration of her own identity as both Iranian and American helps cement and secure her place as a voice of authority on these issues. Additionally, her standpoint rega

E) Focusing On The Work

*Salt Lake Tribune*, 2/4/17, “ACLU Has Never Been More Needed, And Utahns Know It”:

“The staff of the ACLU, at the national level and in each state, are rising to the challenge presented by each new civil liberties threat as it occurs. The pace is exhausting, but we are determined...The ACLU of Utah remains deeply engaged in a years-long battle to bring reform to Utah's public defender system. Substantive denial of legal counsel has been the status quo for far too long in our state, and we are committed to changing that.

In partnership with Racially Just Utah and others, we have fought to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline, so that students of color are not be pushed out of school and into the criminal justice system. We have worked with prisoner rights groups and the Department of Corrections to slowly reduce and reorient the use of solitary confinement in state correctional facilities.”

**Why It Works:** The article lays the groundwork for the ACLU of Utah’s grassroots activism. It also highlights a number of different places that the organization focuses on giving readers a better understanding of some of their campaigns.
How To Write A Letter To The Editor (LTE)

What is a LTE?
A letter to the editor (LTE) is a response to an article or column posted in a magazine. An LTE can come from various sources, private citizens, activists, other journalists, or experts in the issues discussed in the original article. However, LTE’s are often most effective when they are crafted by those who have a unique perspective or breadth of knowledge about the subject expressed in the original article. Though LTE’s are often take the opposing side of the narrative presented in the original article, they can also be spaces to reaffirm an piece of writing that supports your viewpoint and add more context to the position presented.

Dos & Don’ts of the LTE

Do keep it brief. An LTE (unless particularly special circumstances) should be no more that 2 to 3 paragraphs. Anything longer than that should be craft into an op-ed.

Do get to the point quickly. Because LTE’s rely on brevity, there is no room for introductions or declarations of who you are.

Do cite the article and author you are responding to in your LTE. Remember to address the author and the content head on, do not beat around the bush.

Remember your tone. What is the general voice of the letter? Humorous? Sardonic? Serious? Whatever tone you decide to write in, make sure that it is consistent.

Do get specific. Use your LTE to highlight specifically problematic language or issues.

Do use facts. While an LTE is a personal response, it is always more potent when quantitative data is included.

Don’t insult. It is easy to insult an article or author in an LTE. However, it is more effective (and your work is more likely to be chosen) if you provide a cogent and respectful response.

Do be creative. Use the space you have thoughtfully. Figure out the best way to make your argument while standing out from the dozens of other LTEs.

Do use universal language. Writing an op-ed is not the same as writing an academic paper. Most newspaper articles are written on an 8th grade reading level. Attempt to take very high brow concepts and make them palatable and understandable to all audiences.