

# Your Words Can Change the World

**How:** A letter to the editor is a chance to influence a wider audience than your group of friends. In particular, people that do not necessarily participate in social media tend to read the newspaper. Your letters will encourage and give hope to others who feel that they are alone in our community. We can change the narrative and the way issues are discussed both through our letters and our conversations.

**Topics:** A topic can be anything that you feel passionate about. It can be a specific issue or you can address a general philosophy. Some possible topics:

Climate crisis	Living wage	Medicare for all
Equality	Women's rights	Human rights
Women's health	Equal pay for women	Education for all
Racism	Black Lives Matter	Hate crimes
A better society	Socialism	Capitalism
White House corruption	Trump treason	Guns
Voter suppression	Electoral college	Gerrymandering
Taxes	Illinois taxes	Illinois pensions
Illinois budget	Prison reform	Immigration
Children in cages	Wall	DACA

Some ideas to keep in mind when **writing or conversing**:

- Introduce your **main topic** at the beginning.
- Present **your ideas first**.
- Present your ideas **efficiently and passionately, with moral framing**.
- Do not include a lot of data and facts.
- Do present ideas that you **believe in**.
- Present your ideas in a **positive light** with your **own framing** and do not invoke opposition framing.
- To quote Lakoff—“**Share real stories** about how your issue affects real people. Or share stories about how you learned basic values from your mother, teacher, etc.”
- To quote Lakoff—“**Say it simply**. For example, if you say ‘environment’ there is no one clear image that comes to mind. If you say ‘forest’, ‘soil’, or ‘water’ they bring clear images to mind. Work to use words that bring clear images to mind.”
- Conclude by **repeating the key words of your framing**.

**Framing:** Use good framing that focuses on the positive points of your issue and do not spend much time arguing against the other side since that can reinforce their frame rather than your own.

**Feedback:** Let at least one other person read your letter to get some feedback. Many of us in the Huddle or the Coles Progressives would be happy to look over your letter. A fresh pair of eyes sometimes spots framing improvements and finds typos.

**How to send:** Most newspapers have an online submission form. The Journal Gazette-Times Courier's submission link is [https://jg-tc.com/forms/contact/letter\\_to\\_the\\_editor/](https://jg-tc.com/forms/contact/letter_to_the_editor/).

The Huddle website at [charlestonhuddle.com](http://charlestonhuddle.com) (click on the Newspaper tab) has links to seven other area newspapers with online submission web pages and also contact information for 15 other area newspapers.

For further reading about framing progressive ideas see George Lakoff's books

- Don't Think of an Elephant!
- The Little Blue Book - The Essential Guide to Thinking and Talking Democratic

The following framing ideas are from The Little Blue Book - The Essential Guide to Thinking and Talking Democratic by George Lakoff. There are many useful ideas here that can help us use good framing.

## Public

- American democracy is built on the ethic of citizens caring about other citizens. Its **moral mission** is to **protect and empower everyone equally** by the provision of public resources.
- **The public is the foundation for the private** — for decent private lives and for private enterprise that works.
- **No one makes it on his or her own without the public.** People who are wealthy haven't built their own roads and schools, educated their own knowledgeable employees, or done their own basic research, nor are they fully protected by their own army and police, and nor do they maintain their own clean food supply.
- "Smaller government" really means **total corporate government** and the **dismantling of our nation** as we know it, love it, and need it to be.

## The Shift From Public to Corporate Government

- Privatization is the **replacement of elected governments** with **unelected corporate governments**, which run more and more aspects of American life **for their own profit, not for the public good.**
- As more of the Public is **eliminated and privatized**, corporations make more money, though ordinary people do not.
- Corporations have extraordinary political power, the power to give unlimited money to organizations that fund candidates in elections. This power is being used by corporations to **shift the governing structure** of the country to themselves. This is **undemocratic.**
- Conservative officeholders who refuse to raise taxes as a matter of conservative principle are **creating deficits.**
- The Public and the Corporate **need each other and need to be in balance.**

## Corporations Govern Your Life

- This debate is about **liberty** from **corporate government** and **corporate meddling in our lives.**
- **Corporations govern our lives** with almost no accountability. Due to a lack of regulations, corporations are in many cases **free and even encouraged to run our lives** in ways that are **intrusive, oppressive,** and even **tyrannical.**
- Corporations **intrude on our personal lives** collecting private information about us and snooping on the way we use our computers.
- Health insurance companies make decisions about **your health and your life.** Their decisions are governed by their own interest in maximizing profit. If health insurance companies are not regulated and if health care remains in private hands, you become **a bystander while others decide how healthy you will be and whether you will live.**

- On a daily basis, Americans face corporate **nuisance, intrusiveness, invasion, control, interference, oppression, theft,** and even **tyranny**. The massive control of corporations over our lives impinges on our most basic **freedoms**. To protect ourselves from this imposition, we need regulations.
- Government—that is, people **who work for you** and are **accountable to you**—work to **protect your liberty**.
- Corporations govern you **for their profit and benefit, not yours**. They are **transparent** about it only if government requires them to be through regulation.
- The struggle over adequate regulations is between **corporations' interest** in making **maximal profit at your expense** and the **government's interest** in **protecting your life and your liberty**.

## Predatory Privatization

- Government has a **moral duty** to protect and empower its people. Private corporations have no such duty to citizens, which is why maintaining a **robust Public** is absolutely necessary to ensure everyone's well-being, prosperity, and safety.
- Privatization is the transfer of public property, public functions, and public institutions into private hands. ... Where **people's basic protection and empowerment** are concerned, it is **the government's duty** to preserve the freedom of citizens.
- Privatization can be **predatory** and downright immoral when, for the sake of profit, it **removes or prevents the protection and empowerment of the public**, whether by handing our kids' education over to corporations or putting our water supply in corporate hands.
- Privatization makes the life of citizens **more expensive**: corporations work to **maximize profit** with no more obligation to customers. (Privatization costs the public more because corporations must make a profit.)

## Workers are Profit Creators

- Workers are **profit creators**. Corporations can profit only if people work for them.
- Health care benefits and pensions are part of the **pay earned** by workers. They are **deferred payments for work done**.
- Health care benefits and pensions **benefit the workers and the companies that provide them**.
- Health care benefits and pensions **add to profits**. They buy loyalty so that companies can **avoid the costs of recruiting and training new employees** as well as the **costs of operating with untrained employees**.
- Companies are **ethically responsible** for setting aside funds for workers' deferred payments and **not using them for anything else**. **Spending** those funds—on capital investment, stockholder dividends, or payments and bonuses to top managers—is **unethical**.

## Public Education Benefits all and Protects Freedom

- Public education is necessary for a democracy and a vibrant economy.
- Democratic freedom requires education. You are **not free** if you don't know what is possible for you, what affects you, and how to do things you care about.
- **We all benefit** from our educational system ... **We need others to be knowledgeable. Whether or not we happen to be in school, we are using the educational system.**
- The more **education is limited to an elite**, the more it will **cost to access the knowledge** education offers. **The more critical knowledge is monopolized by privatized higher education, the more expensive it becomes.**
- A democratic society requires education that is both widespread and deep. Every day we depend on others being educated ... In a democracy, **knowledge needs to be democratized**, and the democratization of knowledge can only come through public education.

## Rethinking Food

- The Farm Bill should promote and subsidize **healthy food** and discourage, ban, or at least not subsidize **harmful food**.
- We shouldn't give **public money** to mostly corporate agriculture **that puts profit ahead of safe and healthy food**.
- **Sun food** is food grown organically and locally. **Oil food** is grown with petroleum-based pesticides and insecticides or uses a lot of oil to be shipped long distances. Most funding goes to **oil food** and almost nothing goes to **sun food. That should be reversed.**
- Farm Bill funds should **feed people. Food stamps prevent hunger if not starvation.**
- **Poisons should be removed from food.** That includes **pesticides, herbicides, antibiotics, and toxic fertilizers**, especially those with **radioactive waste**.
- **Crop insurance is profit insurance.** Taxpayers shouldn't be wasting food money on it.

## Systemic Effects in Nature and Economics

- **Dirty energy industries**—oil, coal, and natural gas—make a lot of their money by **not cleaning up**. They profit by not paying the **full costs of doing business** and instead **placing those costs on the public**.
- **Nature is never free. Taking or destroying it places costs elsewhere.**
- When corporations take **“free” water for fracking, “free” boreal forests for tar oil, and our “free” air and water to dump their pollution, we bear the cost.**
- **Surreptitiously transferring costs and risks to the public is the economic and moral equivalent of theft.**

## An Infrastructure for Eternal Energy

- It is time to phase out the **old polluting energies**—coal, gas, and oil—as soon as possible and replace them with energy sources that are **eternally present, clean, and free**: the **sun, wind, water, and soil** energies.
- We need to **clean up our energy**.
- **Phase out dirty energy**. Don't prolong it with subsidies.
- **Sun, wind, water, and soil are eternal energy sources**.
- **Eternal energy is the future. It's here now; it's free; it's clean.**
- **Nuclear power is a nuclear threat. Look at Japan.**
- So-called **nuclear waste is highly radioactive** and will stay that way for over 10,000 years. It can **leak or be stolen and kill**. There is nothing clean about it. **Radiation pollution is the worst form of pollution.**
- **Just as a penny saved is a penny earned, so energy saved is energy produced. Conservation does as much for us as production. Save, don't drill.**
- **Good soil feeds us forever.** In the long run, a farm's soil is worth more than the oil underneath. Don't drill.
- In terms of energy alone, **conservation is equivalent to drilling**. But **drilling destroys, while conserving saves**. Conservation, not drilling, should be subsidized.
- **For citizens, conservation wins. For oil companies, drilling wins.** Which matters more to you?
- **Preventing conservation is wasting energy.**