CFA Communications Corner: August Issue

How to Write and Place an Op-Ed

An op-ed—the term stands for “opposite the editorial page”—is an opinion essay written by either a newspaper’s staff columnist or an outside contributor. Writing and placing an op-ed is a potential means for promoting your work on behalf of your Action Coalition or the broader Campaign for Action and for raising awareness of an issue among policymakers and the public. Here are some suggestions for writing and placing an op-ed:

- **Say Something New:** Stay abreast of the paper’s angle on the subject you want to address. If you provide a new angle, your submission may receive more consideration.
- **Stay Focused:** Hone in on one angle of the issue. Include relevant examples and statistics; provide succinct interpretations of their significance; and if possible, close with a “call to action.”
- **Address Your Target Audience:** Decide whom you want to reach and consider their interests as you write. What are their needs, concerns and likely objections to your points?
- **Avoid Jargon:** Do not use technical or “insider” language. If such a term is absolutely necessary, define it for a lay audience.
- **Edit Your Work:** Submit a carefully written piece, keeping in mind that newspapers reserve the right to edit it further (usually for length and clarity). Newspapers generally limit op-eds to between 700 and 800 words. You might ask a friend or someone outside your field to review the article for clarity before you submit it.
- **Follow the Paper’s Guidelines:** Major newspapers expect exclusivity and will not consider op-eds that have been submitted to, posted to or published by other news outlets, including blogs. Papers typically publish their terms and conditions for accepting op-eds on their Web sites.