

Write a Letter to the Editor: Spread the word to make sure the Sanctuary Promise Act is fully implemented!

After decades of organizing to build safe and welcoming communities for all, we won a huge victory in 2021 by passing the Sanctuary Promise Act (SPA) through the Oregon legislature. Now it's time to make sure it's fully implemented! One simple and effective way to participate in this statewide effort is to submit a Letter to the Editor to your local newspaper to spread the word and make sure local law enforcement knows you believe everyone should be able to live safely in Oregon. **Can you take half an hour to write a letter?**

1. How to Write a Letter to the Editor

Here are some basic tips for writing Letters to the Editor, regardless of the topic:

- **Make it local and know your readers.** Explain how the issue will affect you or people you know in your community. Stories are always powerful!
- **Make your letter timely.** If the newspaper recently printed a story or column about the issue, you can reference the article and use it as a springboard for your letter.
- **Keep your letter short and to the point.** The usual limit is 250 words. Put the most important message in the first paragraph. Limit the number of points you make, stay on one subject, and get feedback from one or two people before sending it in.
- **Ask for action!** Tell readers what you want them to do. This includes your elected representatives, who certainly read letters to the editor. They are elected to be accountable to your community and state law. Hold them to it!
- **Invite conversation and be prepared to follow through.** The goal of the letter is to connect with others and move toward localized action. Your letter may invoke strong feelings in people, either in agreement or disagreement. Know how much you're willing to engage, and be prepared to have those conversations.

2. Sample Letter to the Editor about the SPA:

In 1987 Oregonians passed a sanctuary law to prevent local law enforcement from assisting in federal immigration enforcement. In 2021, we passed an even stronger law called the Sanctuary Promise Act (SPA).

In February, Rural Organizing Project and Community Alliance of Lane County sued the Cottage Grove Police Department for violating the SPA.

As a member of **NAME OF YOUR HUMAN DIGNITY GROUP** here in **YOUR COUNTY/COMMUNITY**, I'm concerned that similar illegal practices are happening here. Local law enforcement agencies should focus their resources on local priorities, not on assisting a multi-billion dollar federal agency.

The Lane County suit alleges the Cottage Grove police are:

- Detecting and taking people into custody for immigration enforcement;
- Notifying immigration officials of people in local custody believed to be violating federal immigration law and sharing their release dates;
- Giving immigration officials access to people detained in restricted areas of the jail;
- Sharing information with immigration officials about people in its custody.

These and other illegal practices drain local resources, erode community trust in police, and tear families apart.

Let's ask **SHERIFF/POLICE CHIEF** how they updated their policies and practices to comply with the 2021 SPA. Has everyone in the department been trained to understand and follow the new rules? Will they share a copy of their policies and go on record pledging to follow this law? Would they meet with community members to answer our questions?

Please join us in building a safe **YOUR COUNTY/COMMUNITY** for everyone who lives here.

YOUR NAME

PHONE NUMBER

ADDRESS

Note that different papers have different requirements for the contact information you need to provide. Ask your local editor for what they need specifically. Some papers will also allow you to publish a letter under multiple names.

3. Where to send your letter:

Choose a paper; email them with "LTE" in the subject line. Include your Letter to the Editor, name, address, and phone number. Most papers require contact information to print. Need support figuring out how to submit it? Contact ROP at bruce@rop.org.

In addition to the paper, here are some additional ideas of where to share it!

- Community newsletters, blogs, or Facebook pages
- Community radio (especially if you are willing to read it as a commentary)
- Your own group's social media pages
- Church or civic groups like League of Women Voters, Rotary, Kiwanis, Lion's Club, etc.
- Anyone who might listen and has invited community input. After all, you already wrote it. Might as well share it.

Your letter may not get printed: Newspapers get many letters and can't print them all. Most papers won't print the same writers over and over or multiple letters on the same topic in one edition. If you had a letter published recently, ask a friend or co-worker to write the next one. Sometimes multiple letters on the same topic sent at the same time will encourage the paper to print one of them where they otherwise would have published none.