

Suggested Text for Letters to the Editor

Below are two sample letters to the editor. One focuses on poverty and unemployment and the second emphasizes health insurance reform.

Please use these as a guide to help you draft your own letter to the editor. We strongly encourage you to modify these templates to include not only your state's statistics but also to cite your own experience.

National and state health insurance data will be available from the Census Bureau on September 10. For poverty and income, it is best to use the national data released on September 10, and to use state, local, and Congressional District data available on September 22.

Poverty – Unemployment Letter

New Census Bureau data shows that X million more people fell into poverty in _____(STATE NAME) in 2008 as the recession began. As troubling as this number is, the reality today is almost certainly worse. The Census data does not cover 2009, and unemployment has been rising sharply this year. In our state the unemployment rate rose from X in July 2008 to Y in July 2009. Economists tell us that poverty rises with rising joblessness, and the increase is sharper for vulnerable groups like children. In fact, the Economic Policy Institute estimates that if unemployment reaches 10 percent in 2010 or later, a shocking 27.3 percent of children nationwide will be poor (up from X percent in 2008). In our state, X percent of our children were poor in 2008.

We must not let this situation get still worse. Congress should extend Unemployment Insurance to allow families suffering in the recession to pay for basic necessities. Our state is cutting/threatening to cut [education, health care, child care and other family services: **include what is accurate in your state**] just at the time when parents are losing jobs and need help. Low-income families should not have to shoulder the burden for our state's budget gap. The federal government has helped reduce the severity of cuts in our state. Washington should recognize that as long as unemployment and poverty are rising, continued federal funds will be needed to prevent cuts from damaging our economy further, instead of giving it (and us) a chance to recover.

Health Insurance Letter

For those who still question whether this country needs health care reform, the new Census Bureau data on the growing numbers of people without health insurance in America paint a clear and convincing picture. The number of _____(STATE NAME) residents without health insurance grew to X (NUMBER) in 2008, an X percent increase over 2007. **(Depending on the numbers you may or may not want to show the increase.)** That number is almost certainly worse today given that the Census data does not cover the worsening economic conditions in 2009. In our state, unemployment rose from X in our state in July 2008 to Y in July 2009.

Even those of us who have not lost insurance are losing benefits and seeing our costs go up. It is harder to afford medicines and doctor visits, and serious illness can send almost any of us into bankruptcy, while private insurance companies profit. We know our current system is broken – the Census report is just more proof.

Politicians in Washington, D.C. need to end their petty bickering and give this country health care reform to make sure people can afford and count on their health insurance.