

## Challenge Corporate Power



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### How to Write a Letter to the Editor

*(Adapted from Salzman's "Making the News" and SPIN Project Materials)*

#### What is a Letter to the Editor?

- Letters to the editor (LTE's) most often discuss a recent event/issue covered by a publication, radio station, or TV program.
- They are your chance to "sound-off" to your community about issues in the news. **They are widely read**—so make them an important part of your media strategy.

#### Elements / Hints

- It is much easier to publish a letter to the editor than it is to place an op-ed, get an editorial written, or get a story written by a reporter.
- Your letter has the best chance of being published if it is a reaction to a story in the paper. Respond as quickly as you can.
- Read the letters page—you will learn how to develop an effective letter-writing style, and you will be able to see if someone has already written on your issue.
- Keep it short and concise—150-200 words. The paper will take the liberty to shorten your letter to suit its format; the more it has to cut, the less control you have of what gets printed. Lead with your most important information.
- Focus on one main point and make a compelling case. Be "witty" without lapsing into sarcasm or clichés.
- Write in short paragraphs, with no more than three sentences per paragraph.
- Don't write too often. Once every three months is about as often as you should write.
- Avoid personal attacks.
- Put your full name, address and phone number at the top of the page and sign the letter at the bottom (unless you are emailing it in) . You must include a phone number for verification purposes.
- Follow the directions regarding how to send the letter.
- Follow up to see if the letter was received.

Here is a sample letter:

To the Editor:

This Fossil Fools Day (April 1<sup>st</sup>), Ford Motor Company should step up to the plate to break America's oil addiction. As glaciers melt, hurricanes rage, gas prices go

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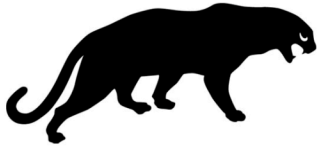
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up and thousands of people are killed in Iraq, Ford's fuel efficiency remains dead last in the US Environmental Protection Agency rankings.

According to a recent poll, the majority of Americans consider it patriotic to buy a fuel-efficient vehicle to help wean the country off Middle Eastern oil. Ford calls itself an innovator and an environmental leader, yet instead of providing plug-in electric hybrid vehicles -- which are ready for manufacture today -- Ford continues to take baby steps and attempt to greenwash consumers.

The good news is that if Ford practiced what it preached we could make great progress in breaking America's oil addiction. Don't be fooled by Ford this Fossil Fools Day. It's time Ford focuses on improving its bottom-of-the-barrel fleet-wide fuel efficiency and offering consumers what they want.

Sincerely,  
XX



## RAINFOREST ACTION NETWORK

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news release

**For Immediate Release**  
May 11, 2006

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### **RAN: \$50 Billion Sounds Big, But isn't Enough to Make Up for Citi's Dirty Investments**

**SAN FRANCISCO** – Rainforest Action Network (RAN) had tempered praise for Citi's announcement today that it will invest \$50 billion over the next ten years to address global climate change. The pressure group renewed its call on Citi and the rest of the financial industry to stop funding new coal development and other projects that contribute to the global climate crisis. RAN's analysis showed that \$50 billion was insufficient to undo the damage being done by Citi's investments in coal-fired power plants and other carbon-intensive energy sources.

"Fifty billion dollars to fight climate change is impressive, until one realizes that Citi actually invests far more in some of the world's most polluting industries," said Michael Brune, RAN's executive director. "It's a little like Citi is using its left hand to clean up a mess made by its right. The reality is that Citi cannot credibly claim any leadership on climate change until it stops contributing greatly to the problem and phases out its massive investments in dirty energy."

According to data provider Thomson Financial, Citi was the top arranger of corporate financing for the power and oil and natural-gas sectors in 2006, controlling 10 percent of the \$272 billion power-lending market and 8.7 percent of the \$310 billion oil and natural-gas lending market.

Many banks, including Citi, have been under increasing criticism over their investments in new coal-fired power plants, which emit more greenhouse gases than any other source of electricity. In mid-April, RAN organized protests nationwide targeting several of the world's biggest financial institutions challenging them to adopt the Hansen plan, named after NASA's noted climatologist Dr. James Hansen, who has called for a moratorium on new coal-fired power plants. The series of actions coincided with Step it Up 2007!, the largest national day of action to stop global warming in U.S. history.

"The bulk of a bank's impact on climate is through its investments, so for Citi to become credible on climate change, they need to do more than just fund clean energy, they also need to stop financing dirty energy," said Rebecca Tarbotton, RAN's Global Finance campaign director. "Citi continues to be a leading funder of dirty coal-fired power plants, which are responsible for 40% of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions"

In January, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) asserted as "unequivocal" the evidence that human activity is the source of climate change. This week, the IPCC issued a new report noting that, though low carbon ways of generating energy and heat and powering transport are already available, without the introduction of policies that put these solutions into practice, greenhouse gas emissions will increase by between 25 and 90 percent over the next 20 years.

For more information, visit [www.dirtymoney.org](http://www.dirtymoney.org).