Issue: An *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* reader asked how many conservative/Republican and liberal/Democratic letters ran on the Voices page in the three months leading up to Election Day, and predicted a ratio of 5 to 1 in favor of liberal letters.

Methodology: The months of August through October were used, along with the first four days of November in order to include Election Day, for a total of 95 days. Letters were classified as leaning Democratic if they either praised Democrats or criticized Republicans; likewise, those that praised Republicans or criticized Democrats were classified as leaning Republican. Political letters for other parties, that both praised and criticized the same party (or all parties), or that neither promoted nor criticized a party were classified as "other." Letters on ballot issues, unless the writer specifically noted a political leaning, were also classified as "other," as ballot issue opponents and proponents spanned categories.

Findings: A total of 401 political letters ran in the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* in the period from Aug. 1 to Nov. 4, 2014. Of those, 137 letters were classified as Democratic, 127 as Republican, and 137 as other, for a breakdown in percentage of 34 percent, 32 percent, and 34 percent respectively.
By month, in descending order of numbers:

August: Republican (41), Other (36) and Democratic (32)
September: Democratic (37), Republican (31) and Other (21)
October: Other (67), Democratic (58) and Republican (49)
November 1-4: Other (13), Democratic (10) and Republican (6)

Conclusion: Letters on the Voices page in the three months leading up to and including Election Day 2014 appeared to be fairly evenly distributed across political philosophies. While the numbers varied day to day on how many letters appeared and which way they leaned, on average, little statistical difference was seen in the categories.

Tables follow with breakdowns for each month.

Table 1.1-*August*

	Democratic	Republican	Other	Political (total)
1	1	0	4	5
2	1	1	2	4
3	1	0	3	4
4	5	2	1	8
5	0	2	3	5
6	1	1	2	4
7	2	2	0	4
8	2	0	2	4
9	0	1	2	3
10	1	2	1	4
11	1	3	3	7
12	0	3	0	3
13	0	0	1	1
14	3	2	2	7
15	0	2	2	4
16	2	2	0	4
17	2	2	1	5
18	0	0	0	0
19	0	2	0	2
20	2	0	0	2
21	0	1	1	2
22	3	0	0	3
23	0	2	0	2
24	2	2	1	5
25	1	1	1	3
26	0	1	2	3
27	1	0	0	1
28	0	0	1	1
29	0	2	0	2
30	0	3	0	3
31	1	2	1	4
Total	32	41	36	109

Table 1.2-*September*

	Democratic	Republican	Other	Political (total)
1	1	2	0	3
2	1	1	0	2
3	1	0	1	2
4	1	1	0	2
5	2	2	0	4
6	1	1	0	2
7	2	3	0	5
8	3	1	0	4
9	1	1	0	2
10	2	0	1	3
11	1	2	1	4
12	0	0	1	1
13	0	0	0	0
14	3	2	1	6
15	2	3	0	5
16	3	1	1	5
17	1	0	0	1
18	2	1	1	4
19	0	1	0	1
20	0	0	2	2
21	1	3	0	4
22	1	0	0	1
23	2	0	1	3
24	1	0	1	2
25	0	1	4	5
26	2	0	0	2
27	0	0	2	2
28	1	2	4	7
29	1	2	0	3
30	1	1	0	2
Total	37	31	21	89

Table 1.3-*October*

	Democratic	Republican	Other	Political (total)
1	1	1	3	5
2	2	2	4	8
3	3	1	0	4
4	0	1	0	1
5	2	2	0	4
6	2	0	1	3
7	1	1	1	3
8	0	0	1	1
9	1	1	1	3
10	3	2	0	5
11	0	1	4	5
12	2	3	3	8
13	2	0	1	3
14	1	0	2	3
15	1	1	3	5
16	2	2	3	7
17	1	1	2	4
18	2	0	3	5
19	3	1	3	7
20	1	2	3	6
21	1	0	3	4
22	1	0	3	4
23	4	6	1	11
24	5	5	0	10
25	4	1	1	6
26	1	2	3	6
27	4	2	5	11
28	1	1	2	4
29	0	3	3	6
30	3	5	3	11
31	4	2	5	11
Total	58	49	67	174

Table 1.4-*November 1-4*

	Democratic	Republican	Other	Political (total)
1	1	2	5	8
2	3	1	2	6
3	3	1	6	10
4	3	2	0	5
Total	10	6	13	29

Table 1.5-*Monthly totals and percentage of total*

	August	September	October	November	Total
Democratic	32 (29%)	37 (41.5%)	58 (33%)	10 (34%)	137 (34%)
Republican	41 (38%)	31 (35%)	49 (28%)	6 (21%)	127 (32%)
Other	36 (33%)	21 (23.5%)	67 (39%)	13 (45%)	137 (34%)
Total	109	89	174	29	401

Issue: As an adjunct to an *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* reader's question about the number of conservative and liberal letters published on the Voices page in the three months leading up to and including Election Day, I counted the letters concerning the hotly contested U.S. Senate race between Democratic incumbent Sen. Mark Pryor and Republican U.S. Rep. Tom Cotton. The count was performed with no expectations or prediction of outcome.

Methodology: The months of August through October were used, along with the first four days of November in order to include Election Day, for a total of 95 days. Letters that mentioned the Senate race were classified as leaning for Pryor if they praised him and/or criticized Cotton; likewise, letters were classified as leaning for Cotton is they praised him and/or criticized Pryor. Letters that praised or criticized both candidates or that mentioned candidates from other parties or the Senate race in general were classified as "Neither/Both."

Findings: Of the 401 political letters that ran in the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* in the period from Aug. 1 to Nov. 4, 2014, 106 of those were determined to have mentioned the Senate race. A total of 47 letters that leaned toward Pryor were published on the Voices page, along with 39 for Cotton, and 20 letters deemed to be Neither/Both, for a breakdown in percentage of 44 percent, 37 percent and 19 percent respectively.

By month, in descending order of numbers:

August: Cotton (6), Pryor (5) and Neither/Both (4)
September: Cotton (12), Pryor (12) and Neither/Both (8)
October: Pryor (24), Cotton (18) and Neither/Both (8)
November 1-4: Pryor (6), Cotton (3) and Neither/Both (0)

Conclusion: Though letters for both major candidates started out fairly evenly, Pryor had a lead over Cotton beginning in October. The 7 percentage-point spread over the study period is slight but significant, and likely is a result of the fact-checking process.

Tables follow with breakdowns for each month.

Table 2.1-*August*

	Mark Pryor	Tom Cotton	Neither/Both
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	1	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	1	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	1	2	0
11	1	0	0
12	0	0	0
13	0	0	1
14	0	1	0
15	0	0	1
16	1	0	0
17	0	0	1
18	0	0	0
19	0	1	0
20	0	0	0
21	0	1	0
22	0	0	0
23	0	0	0
24	0	0	0
25	0	0	0
26	0	0	1
27	0	0	0
28	0	0	0
29	0	1	0
30	0	0	0
31	0	0	0
Total	5	6	4

Table 2.2-*September*

	Mark Pryor	**Tom Cotton**	**Neither/Both**
1	0	0	0
2	0	1	0
3	0	0	1
4	0	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	1	3	0
8	0	0	0
9	1	1	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	1	0
12	0	0	0
13	0	0	0
14	2	2	1
15	1	0	0
16	1	1	1
17	0	0	0
18	1	0	0
19	0	0	0
20	0	0	2
21	1	3	0
22	1	0	0
23	0	0	0
24	0	0	0
25	0	0	1
26	1	0	0
27	1	0	0
28	1	0	2
29	0	0	0
30	0	0	0
Total	12	12	8

Table 2.3-*October*

	Mark Pryor	Tom Cotton	Neither/Both
1	0	0	0
2	2	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	0	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	1	0
12	0	2	0
13	1	0	0
14	0	0	0
15	1	1	0
16	1	1	1
17	1	1	0
18	2	0	0
19	2	1	1
20	0	0	1
21	1	0	0
22	0	0	1
23	3	5	0
24	3	3	0
25	1	1	1
26	0	0	1
27	2	0	0
28	1	0	1
29	0	0	1
30	1	2	0
31	2	0	0
Total	24	18	8

Table 2.4-*November 1-4*

	Mark Pryor	Tom Cotton	Neither/Both
1	0	1	0
2	0	0	0
3	3	1	0
4	3	1	0
Total	6	3	0

Table 2.5-*Totals*

	August	September	October	November	Total
Mark Pryor	5	12	24	6	47 (44%)
Tom Cotton	6	12	18	3	39 (37%)
Neither/Both	4	8	8	0	20 (19%)
Total	15	32	50	9	106