



Illinois Library Association

A large, stylized rainbow graphic composed of concentric, semi-circular bands in a gradient of colors: red, orange, yellow, green, and blue. The bands are separated by white spaces, creating a vibrant, multi-layered effect.

**READY SET  
ADVOCATE**

**Library Advocacy Tool Kit**



# Developing a Relationship with Local Officials

While your federal and state legislators are very important people in the legislative process it is your local officials who will help you build the foundation you need to cement your library's mission and importance in your community. You will be a library advocate when you follow some of these important steps:

- Make sure the mayor and all elected officials of your community are on your mailing and email lists.
- Keep them informed by sending them your periodic library newsletter and other communication pieces.
- If they are on social media, make sure you are following them.
- Invite your elected officials to the library for a tour. Take their picture. Post it in your library newsletter (print and online) and on library social media and website and email a copy to your official.
- When forming focus groups or writing your library's strategic plan, make sure you include your local elected and appointed officials.
- Check to see if your elected officials have a library card. If they do not, contact them and invite them to your library to get one and make a press event out of it.
- Select a program that your official could be involved in, such as a poetry reading, handing out awards to summer reading participants, or the like. Take their picture. Invite the press to cover the event. If the press cannot make it, send them a picture.
- If you have anyone on staff that is good with Photoshop and the ALA READ poster software, consider making READ posters with your elected officials and their favorite books. Hang them in the library, post online, and make sure your elected official gets a framed copy.
- Make space for your elected officials to conduct town halls and open meetings for their constituents in your library. You're not only supporting civic engagement for your community; you are also reinforcing your relationship with your officials.
- If you hear that your elected officials are appearing at a community forum, take time to stop by. Chances are most of the topics won't impact your library, but this is an opportunity for you to see your representative and let the officials know you appreciate their support.
- If possible, attend fundraisers for your elected officials. Your officials will appreciate you being there. Again, take a moment to thank them for their support of library issues.
- Speak to local groups, organizations, and agencies about library services and programming.
- Get involved and encourage your staff to become involved in other aspects of your community as well. Join business networking groups such as the Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, and the like.
- Develop partnerships with the park district, social service agencies, and other governmental and nonprofit entities that are offering programming and solving problems in your community.
- Be a problem solver in your community and bring together other community leaders to discuss local issues, concerns, and initiatives.