

national library legislative day in washington d.c.

What is National Library Legislative Day?

The American Library Association, Chief Officers of State Library Agencies and the District of Columbia Library Association sponsor National Library Legislative Day. This is an opportunity for all Illinois librarians and library supporters to join together and make their voices heard on a national level. Library advocates can participate by traveling to Washington D.C. and visiting in person or they can attend the virtual way.

I am going to go to Washington D.C.; Who should I let know and do I need to register?

You can register on the ILA Website. The National Library Legislative Day is usually held during April or May so watch for announcements from ILA. You can also check ala.org for the date so you can mark your calendar.

I am registered. Now What?

- Make your hotel reservations. Hotel rooms in D.C. fill up quickly so do this as soon as possible.
- Make your flight reservations. If at all possible, you want to fly into Reagan International Airport rather than Dulles as it is located much closer to D.C. and it's cheaper to get to D.C. from Reagan than Dulles.
- Make a list of your federal legislators. Get to know their background, committees and interests. You can use Capwiz to find this information along with the legislator's bills and voting record on library issues.
- Current information on library issues can be found by using the ila.org link for Advocacy or the ala.org link for Issues and Advocacy.
- After you register with ILA, you will be sent your registration information and other details related to the day.
- Put together a fact sheet of key issues that affect your library for discussion with the legislators.

What do I bring and what do I pack?

- Business casual attire is acceptable, especially for the day of workshops on library issues. For the actual visits, consider wearing a dress or business suit. Comfortable shoes are a must since there will be lots of walking. Bring an umbrella and jacket since the weather can be unpredictable.
- Pack business cards and publicity materials specific to your library. Pack a camera so that you can take a photo with your legislator.

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I'm in D.C. at my hotel. Now what?

- ILA staff will deliver a packet of detailed information regarding National Library Legislative Day.
- Included will be a detailed agenda and information relating to the workshops sponsored by the ALA Washington Office. These workshops will familiarize you with the library issues to discuss with the legislators.
- Also in the packet will be a list of appointments with the various federal representatives and the two senators. Along with the appointment times will be a list of who might be attending each office visit.

It is the morning of the legislative office visits. What do I do?

- Make sure you have your legislative information packet, business cards, issue sheet, and any library information you brought to share. Don't forget the camera.
- Note the appointment time (ILA office makes all appointments) with your legislators.
- For the most part, you will be with a group of other library supporters on your visit. Prior to the visit, gather in the hallway to designate a group leader and to decide who will present what issue. A good idea is to alternate who is speaking on each issue. Limit your visit to a few main issues.

What do I need to know to get through security at each of the buildings?

- You will go through security as you enter each federal building.
- Allow a minimum of 15 minutes for going through the security checkpoint at each building.
- Be prepared to remove belts and other metal objects such as keys and jewelry.
- Carry only the bare essentials and leave the bottled water and other liquids behind.
- Have your photo id ready, just in case.
- There is a way to go from building to building via an underground tunnel system in order to eliminate unnecessary security checks. The tunnels are in the basement level and are heavily used, well lighted, and very safe.

What do I do when I get to my appointment?

- Let the secretary know that you and your group are there for an appointment. Gather in the hallway to designate a group leader and to decide who will present what issue. A good idea is to alternate who is speaking on each issue. Limit your visit to a few main issues.
- Pick up the legislator's business card from the secretary so you have it for your files. Leave a business card with the secretary.
- Smile and be calm! Follow the lead of the designated speaker in your group.
- When it is your turn to talk, stress the library's contributions to the community that your legislator represents. If a legislator reminisces about their childhood library, invite them to visit today's library.
- Do not be disappointed if your meeting ends up being with a legislative aide. Treat the aide the same as you would the actual legislator. In many cases, the aide knows more about your issues than the legislator.
- Remember, if you do not know an answer to a question, don't give misinformation. Don't be afraid to say that you will follow up with an answer when you return home. It is extremely important to remember to follow up with all answers.
- Take a group photo with the legislator before you leave the office. The legislative aide will usually be happy to play photographer and take pictures with multiple cameras.

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I have visited my legislators. Now what?

- Upon returning home, follow up with the office in a timely manner if you are providing answers to outstanding questions from your meeting.
- Send a thank you note in some form to the person with whom you met. If you didn't get to see the legislator, send a note explaining that you were there for a visit, talked with the aide, and share your information about library issues.
- Mail thank you notes for in-district visits and e-mail letters of gratitude for visits that take place in Washington. An e-mail is preferred in this case because all postal mail gets irradiated for safety reasons before being delivered to capitol offices. Mail takes up to 6 weeks to go through this process and often becomes charred and brittle making the letters difficult to read.
- Send your area newspaper a short press release and photo about the visit. Also post the visit and any photos taken on your library website, library social media websites, and any print or e-mail communication to your library users.

I cannot travel to Washington D.C. but I still want to participate what do I do?

So the trip to Washington D.C. isn't in your budget? No problem! By calling and/or e-mailing your elected officials in Washington and asking them to vote for libraries, you can make a difference. Just five minutes of your time will help support and strengthen the efforts of the library supporters in Washington D.C. on National Library Legislative Day. Go to ala.org for more information as to how you can participate from home. Remember, if you do not make your voice heard on the inadequate budgets, the closing of libraries, and other important library issues, who will?

