



save the date!

National Library Legislative Day

April 23 and 24, 2012
Capitol Hill, Washington D.C.

With a new political climate in both the House and the Senate, this is a very critical and exciting time for us to get our message out to Congress. A variety of activities have been designed to prepare National Library Legislative Day participants for an informed and effective day of congressional visits.



Illinois Library Association

Join the legislative action network today!

Working Together to Advocate for Illinois Libraries

The Illinois Library Association is excited to announce the launch of the Legislative Action Network (LAN) designed to raise awareness of the importance of Illinois libraries.

What it is:

ILA's advocacy goal is to improve the effectiveness of member contacts with government officials at the local, state, and national levels; proactively develop legislative proposals to strengthen the position of libraries; and assist libraries in positively shaping the perceptions of libraries held by the communities we serve. In order to achieve this goal, LAN needs you to join as a member and start building relationships with your legislators today.

How it works:

You will be asked to contact your state legislators at key times during the legislative process. ILA will make it easy by providing you sample e-mails and letters to help with the communication process. You will have the opportunity to discuss the legislative action item with both the ILA Director and the ILA Lobbyist so that you will be prepared to speak with your legislator with confidence.

How to join:

You can join today! E-mail your name and library district number to ila.org/action (subject line: Legislative Action Network), and you'll receive a confirmation letter stating that you are an official member of the ILA Legislative Action Network. You can find your congressional district numbers for where you work at the ALA Legislative Action Center's Web site at www.capwiz.com/ala/home.

Libraries have a great story to tell, and in these difficult budgetary times you can't expect your elected leaders to support your needs unless you let them know what matters most!



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why be a library advocate?

Library Advocates speak out for libraries because:

- 1.) They value the mission of publicly funded libraries to serve everyone who lives, visits or works in their community
- 2.) If those who benefit from library services don't actively support such services who will? Communities, who hire, elect and support library workers and buildings, do so because they value libraries in their community. Those supporters expect that the people they hire will be their voice in fighting for the best library service for their community.
- 3.) Studies show that if a community has a library it is a successful community. We also know that this could change with decreased funding and increased technology. It is the job of a library advocate to keep the importance of libraries at the forefront of all interested parties.
- 4.) We are the safeguard to intellectual freedom. We know that everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression and this right includes the freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media.
- 5.) The message that libraries are unique and valuable must be communicated loud and clear. We know that libraries today are more than just books. We are social places for meetings, we are human services for those who have needs for survival, we are the first door to learning for young children, and we are the place for internet use and training for lifelong learning. We are so much and we need to shout it out loud in our communities.
- 6.) Many people, even some elected officials, have a stereotyped image of libraries based on interactions which took place generations ago. We must update the image of libraries, librarians, and all library staff for the citizenry of the 21st Century. We have the responsibility to promote our professionalism and worth to everyone.
- 7.) Legislators routinely deal with issues like funding cuts, filters, censorship, legislation mandates and so much more that impact library services. We need to provide a quick response to emerging issues so that their votes can be informed by professional advice.
- 8.) We know that in today's world there is intense competition for dollars and we must continue to fight for all library dollars.



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who should be a library advocate?

A Library Advocate:

- Believes in the value of the library.
- Supports equitable access to information in a democratic society.
- Works with others to get the message out on the importance of libraries.
- Does not have to work in a library or be a library board member.
 - Loves the library for the many services it provides.

Library Advocates Are:

Community Organizations
Friends of the Library
Library Board Members and Trustees
Library Users
Library Volunteers
Library Staff
Business Leaders and Workers
Elected Officials
Community Leaders
Educators, Administrators, School Board Members



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developing relationships with local officials

While your local and state legislators are very important people in the legislative process, your local officials 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:

- Include the mayor and all elected officials of your community on your mailing and e-mail lists.
- Keep them informed by sending them periodic library newsletters and other communication pieces.
- Follow your mayor on Facebook and/or Twitter.
- Invite your elected officials to the library for a tour. Take a picture and send them each a copy.
- When forming focus groups or writing your library's strategic plan, include your local elected and appointed officials.
- If your elected officials do not have a library card, contact them and invite them to your library to get one. Make a press event out of it.
- Select a program that could involve your official (ie: poetry reading, handing out awards to summer reading participants, etc.). Take photos and invite the press to cover the event. If they cannot attend, send them a photo.
- If you have anyone on your staff skilled in Photoshop and the ALA READ poster software, create READ posters featuring your elected officials and their favorite books. Hang them in the library, post online, and send your elected official a framed copy.
- Create space in your library for your elected officials to conduct town halls and open meetings for their constituents. This supports civic engagement for your community, and reinforces 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 official know you appreciate his or her support.
- Attend fundraisers for your elected officials and take a moment to thank them for their support of library issues. Your officials will appreciate you being there.
- 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 (Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, etc.).
- 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.



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developing relationships with state and federal legislators

Your legislators have an important job to do. Every day they make decisions that impact everyone in Illinois. Your job is to develop a positive working relationship with them and be an effective advocate for your library.

What is the first step to getting to know them?

When your legislator gets elected into office, send a letter of congratulations and invite them to your library for a tour. Include your legislators on your mail and e-mail lists, friend them on Facebook, and follow them on Twitter.

How do I connect with them?

- Make an appointment to meet with them in your office or their office.
- If you cannot get an appointment with your legislator, ask to meet with a staff person. Building a relationship with your legislator's staff is just as important as building a relationship with your legislator, as they rely heavily on their staff when they are making decisions.

When I meet with them, what do I say, what do I bring?

- Your first meeting will usually be a short one. You will be introducing yourself and your library, and talking briefly about issues that are of importance to your library and its users.
- Bring your business cards. Give one to the administrative assistant and one to the legislator.
- Bring things to the meeting that will showcase your library:
 - ~ Statistics about usage of your library. This would be a good use of your Snapshot Day statistics.
 - ~ Newspaper or online media that details a recent library program or service.
 - ~ A testimonial from a satisfied patron.
 - ~ Your newsletter featuring upcoming events.
 - ~ The most recent Palm Card (available on www.ila.org)
 - ~ An item with your library logo.

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What do I do after the meeting is over?

- Always end your appointment by thanking your elected officials for their support. Thank the administrative assistant for any help he/she gave you for setting up the appointment.
- Send a thank you letter and enclose answers to unanswered questions you might have had during your meeting.

What else can I do to strengthen my relationship with my legislators?

- If your legislator recently passed a piece of legislation you can support, take the time to congratulate him/her. The official will appreciate your support.
- Make sure your legislators know how they can get a library card.
- Invite your elected officials to come for a tour of your library. Take their picture. Post it in your library newsletter (print and online), library social media website, and e-mail a copy to your official.
- Select a program that the official could be involved in (ie: poetry reading, handing out awards to summer reading participants, etc.). Take his/her picture. Invite the press to cover the event. If the press cannot make it, send them a picture.
- If you have anyone on your staff skilled in Photoshop and the ALA READ poster software, create READ posters featuring your elected officials and their favorite books. Hang them in the library, post online, and send your elected official 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 official know you appreciate his/her support.
- If possible, attend fundraisers for your elected officials. This can be difficult as tickets often start at \$100 or more. There usually are events that are not as expensive. Your officials will appreciate your being there. Again, take a moment to thank them for their support of library issues.
- You'll think of other ways to engage your legislators as you get to know them. Once they get to know you, they will start to think of you as their expert on library issues and will contact you from time to time to get your take on a specific issue.



letter writing phone calling and e-mailing legislative messages

Letter Writing

Letters are a simple and powerful way to let a legislator know how you feel. Legislators will pay attention to a letter because letters represent votes and each letter is deemed to represent several like-minded citizens. Letter writing is important if you are communicating with your local, state and federal officials. With the new security measures, your letter may take up to 2 to 3 weeks to get delivered. As a result, in time of urgency it is okay to e-mail or fax your letters. Go to www.house.gov, www.senate.gov, or www.ila.org for contact information.

Letter Writing Key Points:

- Individually written letters – rather than mass form letters – make a greater impression on a legislator.
- Type your name, address and phone number at the top of your letter.
- Always be specific. Your purpose for writing should be stated in the first paragraph of the letter. If your letter pertains to a specific piece of legislation, identify its full name and number, e.g. House Bill: HB____, Senate Bill: SB____. Send your letter while the issue is still alive.
- State your position. Explain why you support or oppose this particular issue. Keep in mind that local examples concerning the impact of this legislation are very powerful. Be courteous and to the point, keeping your letter focused on one issue.
- Ask for a response. Indicate to your legislator that you would appreciate a reply containing his/her position on the issue. “Sincerely yours” is a proper way to conclude your letter.
- Follow up. If you agree with your legislator’s vote, take the time to let him/her know that. Similarly, if you disagree with his/her vote, inform your legislator.
- It is recommended that all written correspondence to your federal legislators be sent to their Illinois district office. This is due to the fact that written communication sent to Washington DC must go through a large amount of security checks and by the time it gets to the legislator it is damaged and the content obsolete. You can find your federal legislator’s address by checking their website.
- Check the Illinois General Assembly website at www.ilga.gov to find out when the Illinois legislature is in session. When the legislature is out of session it is more effective to send your letter to your legislature’s district office.

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Addressing Your Correspondence to the State Senate

The Honorable (Full Name)
State House (Room Number)
Illinois Senate
Springfield, IL 62706

Addressing Your Correspondence to the State House of Representative

The Honorable (Full Name)
State House (Room Number)
Illinois House of Representatives
Springfield, IL 62706

Addressing Your Correspondence to a United States Senator or Representative

The Honorable (full name)
United States Senate
Washington D.C. 20510

Dear Senator (last name)

OR

The Honorable (full name)
United States Representatives
Washington D.C. 20515

Dear Representative (last name)

Telephone Calls

A personal phone call to a legislator or his staff is an effective form of communication. If you already have a relationship with your legislator it is most likely your phone call will take top priority. Remember; do not get discouraged if your call does not get past the legislator's receptionist. The receptionist will make note of your call and log it as "for" or "against" an issue and relay the message to the legislator or his/her aide.

Key Points When Making a Phone Call:

- Begin your call with giving your name and address.
- If calling about a bill, give the bill name, sponsor and number.
- Be brief in explaining your position and give examples if possible.
- Add concrete information to support or not support a bill or issue.
- Ask if the legislator has made a decision on the bill or issue you are calling about.
- If possible, ask if the legislator will co-sponsor the bill you are supporting.
- Always be pleasant and thank the person you are speaking with.
- Always get the person's name that you are speaking with and follow up with a thank you note.

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E-mail

While e-mail can be very effective with some legislators, please remember that most legislators get hundreds of e-mails and a phone call or a letter is really the most effective. However, when time is of essence an e-mail should be used. Having a personal relationship with your legislator will make your e-mail more effective. You should follow the same general rules as when writing mailed correspondence.

E-mail Key points:

- Put your name and address at the top of your message so it is clear that you are a constituent
- Be very brief and personal. If you are working from a form message, personalize it.
- Make your view known in the subject line (e.g., "Support the library") and do not expect a response. Staff may check only the subject lines to gauge public opinion on a particular issue.
- Avoid attachments, because they are rarely read.
- Use e-mail sparingly to avoid being considered "spam".
- Proof carefully, especially when writing in haste. Mistakes may cost you credibility.
- Make sure you include your full name and your complete mailing address, and telephone number so that the legislator knows how to contact you if he/she finds it necessary.
- Illinois Legislators have a drop down box for e-mail on their legislator websites and you can use this when you want to e-mail a legislator.



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?



on-line advocacy resources

There are many excellent tools on the World Wide Web for the library community to use when they are getting ready to advocate their message. These tools are free to use and some are downloadable. It would be a good practice for all librarians and library advocates to bookmark some of the following websites and check them daily in order to stay current and fresh with library issues.

"In a time of turbulence and change, it is truer than ever that knowledge is power."
~ John Fitzgerald Kennedy

Illinois General Assembly provides the following links at www.ilga.gov

Legislation and Laws: All Illinois Bills and Resolutions are listed on this link. The Illinois Compiled Statutes Text is on this site as is the full text of the Illinois Constitution.

Senate: Here is a full list of the senators with short biographies, the bills they sponsor, their district and their party affiliation. Senator Committees are listed as is transcripts and FOIA information.

House: Here is a full list of the House Representative members with short biographies, the bills they sponsor, their district and their party affiliation. House Representative Committees are listed as is transcripts and FOIA information.

Live Audio/Video: A link is provided to each house so that you can listen to or watch the members in session from your computer.

Legislative Glossary: A complete glossary of legislative terms is available here.

Additional links that are helpful are here as well:

- Previous General Assemblies
- Legislative Support Services
- Legislative Ethics Training
- Legislator Lookup
- Capitol Complex Telephone Numbers
- House Employment Opportunities

ALA provides the following links at www.ala.org

Advocacy Clearinghouse: Tools and resources to assist you in advocating for your library.

Advocacy Events: Posts dates and event details for national library advocacy events such as Snapshot Day, National Library Legislative Day, ALA Conference and more.

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Advocacy University: Resources, courses and tools to help library advocates make their case at the local level.

Federal Legislation: Important legislation concerning the library community.

Frontline Fundraising: The Frontline Fundraising Toolkit covers the basics of advocacy.

Legislative Action Center (Capwiz): Has updates on library-related legislation and allows for library advocates to make direct contact with their legislative representatives via e-mail alerts.

Online Courses: Grassroots advocacy webinars are archived here for library advocates to view.

Our Authors, Our Advocates: Using favorite authors to advocate for libraries can be a very powerful tool. ALA has video clips and messages that library advocates can use when they are putting their advocacy event in place.

Public Awareness: The Campaign for America's Libraries is the ALA public awareness campaign about the value of libraries and librarians. This website link has a wealth of tools for library advocates to use to build their own campaign. National Library Week, Library Card Sign Up Month, ACRL, AASL and YALSA campaigns are highlighted here as are author video clips and other library advocacy messages.

State & Local Resources: Best practices on advocacy activities happening at the state and local level around the country.

National Library Legislative Day: An annual event to put library issues at the federal legislative forefront.

ILA provides the following Advocacy links at www.ila.org

Advocacy Publications: Lists all ILA publications available for sale or downloading.

Banned Books: Lists the current year and past years list of banned books

Contact Your Illinois General Assembly Official: Here is directory information on each of the Illinois Representatives and Senators. Also this is the place to visit to find out who your legislators are for your district.

Contact Your U.S. Congressional Official: This is the place you need to go to find out who your federal legislators are and how to contact them. There is also an Alert link to current federal legislation and action steps that all library advocates should take.

Economic Benefits of Libraries: Here is a national list of reports and articles from other libraries on the economic value of libraries.

Election Guide: Here is a tool that can be used to see what elections are occurring in your district area.

Illinois Information Advantage: Here is the full report on The Illinois Information Advantage, a proposal for state funding to provide equitable access to electronic information and training for all Illinois citizens.

Issues and Legislation: Lists all current legislation and action alerts for the Illinois library community.

Legislative Directory: Find out who your state and federal legislators are here.

A Look at the New FOIA Guidelines

NetSafe: Posted here is a short report on how to use the internet safely.

Public Policy Initiatives: An ILA report on the annual ILA Public Policy Initiatives and ILA Action Agenda.

Tax Cap Information 2011

ILA Legislative Palm Card FY2011

2012 Illinois State Library Budget



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