

Building a Common Agenda

Thank you for registering for Library Legislative Day! As an advocate, you are closely connected to the issues and concerns of libraries. Yet for many legislators, the case for supporting libraries is not as clear and, hence, not as urgent as it should be.

To address this, WLA has framed library needs and value in terms legislators are familiar with – the basis for our “Common Agenda”:

1. Education
2. Job Training & Economic Development
3. Information Access & Technology

How to Use the Common Agenda

Use the three agenda papers as a guide to develop a presentation that will speak to your legislator’s key interests. Consider these questions:

- How has your library increased operating efficiencies in recent years?
- Can you provide examples of job development programs in your library?
- What are some key trends in library use, budgets and staffing in your library that showcase your efficiency and services?
(Public libraries can use their annual report data; see Fast Facts and template provided at <http://www.wla.lib.wi.us/legis/day>; for other types of libraries, use gate counts or any other use statistics that can help tell your library’s story.)
- How are you serving the research/educational needs of your community?

Next, consider your legislator’s areas of personal interest and expertise, committees served on, political philosophy, or even the region of the state that your legislator represents.

To learn more and tailor your presentation precisely to the goals of your own legislator, go to <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/>. Your legislator’s website and the Blue Book will list committees, bills and even personal interests. If your legislator is a freshman, this is a great opportunity to get off on the right foot. See <http://wisfrosh1113.blogspot.com/>, courtesy of Paul Nelson, to get more information.

Need more information? Contact Paul Nelson, LD&L Chair, bennel62@gmail.com or WLA Executive Director Lisa Strand, strand@scls.lib.wi.us, (608)245-3640. You may also be interested in Paul Nelson’s “Retiring Guy’s Digest” blog, recently featuring: <http://paulsnewsletter.blogspot.com/2011/02/wisconsin-library-associations-2011.html>.



Read the materials.

Get the background and facts you’ll need to share major library needs and value.

Learn about your legislators’ interests.

Legislators’ websites, the Blue Book and <http://wisfrosh1113.blogspot.com/> describe your legislators’ interests. Use the Common Agenda Legislator Grid to record these interests.

Personalize your presentation.

Advocacy is as much about making a personal connection as it is about presenting the value and needs of Wisconsin libraries. Tie your issues to your legislators’ concerns and interests. If appropriate, consider bringing a sample of what your library offers with regard to the specific topics. Be prepared to answer the questions posed at left.

Prepare to follow up.

Send a thank you note, highlighting key areas of agreement and thanks for previous support. Send follow up information, as appropriate, to build the relationship and remind your legislator of your common agenda.