

Tips for Library Legislative Day 2008

Prior to the Visit

Be prepared! For CLA Fact Sheets go to <http://www.cla-net.org> and for CSLA information go to <http://schoolibrary.org/leg/> In addition, be prepared to present facts and examples from your library. Go to <http://www.legislature.ca.gov/> for information about your legislator. If relevant, go to <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/bilinfo.html> to see how the legislator has voted in committee or on the floor on a particular bill.

The Basics

- Official packets have been prepared with fact sheets and other information to be handed to the legislator or staff member by the Legislative Contact. Bring along your own library business card and/or a handout from your library such as a bookmark to leave behind.
- Be prompt and patient but wait to start the meeting until the Legislative Contact arrives with the official information packet. If you arrive more than a few minutes before the scheduled appointment, wait in the hallway outside the office until the appointed time as legislative staff may push to start without the entire group if you are sitting in the waiting area.
- If the Legislative Contact does not arrive on time, you should let the staff person know that more people are expected. Sometimes staff will suggest waiting a few minutes to allow the other group members to arrive, but be prepared to start at the assigned time if staff indicates that their schedule is tight. Be on time, but be flexible when interruptions occur as legislators' schedules are typically very tight and prone to interruptions.
- You may be meeting with staff if the legislator is unable to attend the meeting. Staff is often more familiar with your issue and will provide you with invaluable access. Sometimes a legislator might come in briefly while you are meeting with staff, or you might meet him or her in the hall.
- Be brief and to the point, mention any bill number/issue in question, and use arguments with pertinent facts for supporting or opposing the bill/issue.
- If possible, give examples of how the legislation or the budget would impact your particular library.
- Pay attention to the time and to subtle clues that indicate that the legislator or staff person is ready to end the meeting. Thank them for taking the time to meet with you and exit promptly.
- Don't dominate the conversation. Be sure to allow everyone in your group a chance to speak.
- Wear business attire – remember you are representing both your library and our profession.

Definite Don'ts

- Don't become angry or hostile.
- Don't make threats.
- Don't fake it, if you don't know an answer. Instead, offer to find the answer and then follow through and do it.
- Never discuss legislation in conjunction with financial contributions.

Follow-up

Thank your legislator and/or staff member for his/her time as you leave the meeting. Send a follow-up “thank you” letter within a week briefly restating your concerns and providing clarifying information if needed.

Other Things to Know

- A room in the Capitol for breaks between meetings is available. **Room 113** will be open to Library Legislative Day participants from **10:00 am -12 noon**, and **Room 115** will be available from **1:30 to 5:00 pm**. These rooms are NOT available during the lunch hour as they are scheduled for legislative business. NO FOOD or DRINK is allowed in these rooms.
- There is a cafeteria in the Capitol Building.
- There are many, many public restrooms, in all of the buildings.
- **Every where you go, talk about your issue or program** – you never know who might be standing next to you, or behind you, listening (it could be a Senator, or a legislator’s aide, or someone from a newspaper).
- Carry your information folder in such a way that the word “Library” is visible on the back.
- Check for changes in location before each meeting. Locations may change if the number of scheduled participants exceeds the space available in a legislator’s office.
- If no meeting was available with one of your legislators, stop by the office and leave a short written message on a topic of concern. Be sure to include your name and where you live or where your library is located as this tactic is only effective when you are an actual constituent of the legislator. Sample scripts are on the attached sheets following. Please write the entire message out on a blank sheet of paper – do **NOT** just fill in the blanks on the following sample.

SAMPLE MESSAGE TO LEAVE IF YOUR LEGISLATOR COULD NOT SEE YOU

Today’s Date:

Dear Senator/Assemblymember:

My name is _____ I live in _____, California.

I came to Sacramento today, because I believe funding for our public libraries should be a priority in the budget this year. Public Libraries are a true community service, available to all.

I am particularly concerned about _____

Please, vote for additional funding for the Public Library Foundation program in the budget this year. **Information is not a luxury. We need to put knowledge first.**

Sincerely,

Your name: _____

Address: _____