



ohio library council

Promoting our libraries. Investing our future.

Library Advocacy:

A Handbook for Ohio Public Libraries

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Introduction

Historically, libraries have been actively involved in legislative advocacy initiatives. In a climate of decreased funding, there is a need for a more consistent, more widespread, and more sophisticated level of reaching legislators on behalf of the millions of citizens who not only use *but* depend on public libraries. This handbook serves as a planning guide for all public libraries.

Portions of this handbook were graciously supplied with permission by The American Library Association “A Library Advocate’s Handbook” and Dr. John Yankey, Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences, Case Western Reserve University. Other sources are noted within the text.

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Defining Library Advocacy

What is Advocacy?

Advocacy is a planned, deliberate and sustained effort to raise awareness of an issue. It is a continuous process during which support and understanding of the issue are gradually increased over an extended period of time. Advocacy utilizes many marketing and public relations tools.

Advocacy differs from both public relations and lobbying. Public relations is the promotion and positioning of an institution or group while lobbying is the interaction with politicians to secure specific objectives at an appropriate point in time in the legislative/budget process.

The lines between advocacy, lobbying and public relations often overlap. The important thing to remember is that a successful advocacy campaign will require you to use all three techniques and to use them effectively, no matter by what name they are called.

Role of the Ohio Library Council

The Ohio Library Council sponsors an active, grassroots government relations effort year in and year out, not just in budget years; not just for a few libraries; and not just by a paid lobbyist. All the time, for all of the libraries and by all of the library community.

The Ohio Library Council has a staff member whose duties include legislative lobbying. It is the responsibility of that position to inform and organize members of the library community into effective lobbyists. It is the responsibility of the library community to be the advocates.

Every elected official will tell you that they are more interested in meeting with and discussing issues with their constituents than with a paid lobbyist. As a constituent, as well as a library professional or supporter, you have the greatest impact with the legislator.

Lobbying is a contact sport. You need to make it part of your library administration routine.

One of the great things about advocacy is that anyone can do it, and do it well. All it takes is a little training and a little practice. When many of us entered the library profession, and certainly when I entered it 30 years ago, being involved in advocacy was perhaps the furthest thing from our minds. But times change, and our profession has changed and adapted to keep up with new trends and shifting needs. Today effective advocacy is a critically important, necessary activity that all of us must be involved in.

George W. S. Hays, Director/Clerk-Treasurer
Salem Public Library
2002 Recipient of the OLC Chap Parsons Award

Who are Library Advocates?

Library advocates believe in the importance of free and equitable access to information in a democratic society. Library advocates believe libraries and librarians are vital to the future of an information literate nation. Library advocates speak out for libraries. Library advocates are everywhere even though they don't always call themselves that. They are:

Library trustees

Whether elected or appointed, trustees generally have political and community connections that can benefit the library. They also have clout as public officials charged with representing the best interest of the library and their community.

Friends of Libraries

As library "ambassadors" in the community, Friends play a valuable role as the eyes and ears of the library as well as its voice. They also help provide the numbers that make legislators sit up and take notice.

Library users

Students, teachers, parents, seniors, business people and other library users are key to any advocacy effort. Their testimonials about how the library has helped them and how much they need libraries provide powerful evidence that commands attention from decision makers.

Institutional and community leaders

School principals, college presidents, union leaders, CEOs and foundation officials should be part of your advocacy network. Support from such leaders helps to ensure your message will be heard at the highest levels.

Librarians and library staff

On the job or off, all library staff have countless opportunities to build public understanding and advocate support. Library administrators are responsible for developing and coordinating an ongoing advocacy effort, one with well-defined roles for staff, board and Friends.

Potential advocates

Every library has supporters who may not belong to a library support group or even use the library. But they may have fond memories of using the library as children, have family members who benefit, or simply believe libraries are important. Some may be highly placed in their institutions or communities. These potential advocates are often glad to speak out if asked.

Building a Library Advocacy Network

While crisis may foster a sense of urgency, building an effective library advocacy network requires a sustained effort.

There must be ongoing recruitment, clear structure and regular communication to keep library advocates informed and involved. In many cases, the Friends of the Library are the nucleus for such a network. While there may not be a need for formal meetings, there should be personal contact on a regular basis with key advocates.

To be most effective, your library advocacy network should represent a cross section of your community by age, income and ethnicity. It should include newspaper editors and legislators, as well as library users and staff. The larger and more diverse your network and the more powerful its members, the stronger the influence it will wield.

Tips

Designate an advocacy coordinator responsible for coordinating and communicating advocacy activities with staff, board members, Friends and others. Citizen groups should work closely with the library board and administration to ensure consistency in the library message and avoid duplication of effort.

Have a clear message. Provide training in how to deliver the message as part of orientation for all library staff, trustees, volunteers and advocates.

Survey the library's trustees, Friends, users and supporters. What civic or professional organizations do they belong to? Are they willing to write letters, call legislators and recruit other advocates? Do they have key contacts with the media, administration, school board or community that might be helpful? Are they experienced, skilled speakers?

Create a database with names of advocates, their contact information, names of their elected representatives and other pertinent information. Keep the database current.

Make sure library advocates receive the library newsletter and annual report as well as updates on funding, legislation and other concerns. Set up a telephone tree and/or electronic mailing list to quickly disseminate action alerts.

What you can do

Librarians/library staff

Be enthusiastic and positive. Let library users and supporters know they can make a difference. Make a point of thanking them for their contributions.

Meet with key community leaders regularly to educate them about your activities and concerns and to recruit their assistance.

Stay informed about advocacy activities of the American Library Association and the Ohio Library Council. Watch for legislative alerts, programs and tools that may benefit your library and community.

Keep library users informed of library issues and advocacy activities. Post action alerts in the library. Dedicate a portion of your library's newsletter and web site to local, state or national legislative issues/concerns. Link to ALA's and OLC's advocacy web pages.

Recruit advocates. Call or write members of the network at least twice a year to give them updated information. Invite them to subscribe to an electronic discussion list to receive updates and action alerts on library issues.

Encourage library users to share their “library stories.” Invite them to testify at budget hearings, participate in media interviews and visit legislators with library officials. (See Appendix: Collecting Library Stories Worksheet.)

Participate in influential community groups and use this as an opportunity to tell the library story and recruit library advocates.

Trustees

Keep well informed about library issues such as funding, censorship, Internet filtering and information literacy.

Make a point of getting to know local and state officials with decision-making power over the library.

Use your political savvy and connections on behalf of the library.

Participate in OLC and ALA Library Legislative Days to ensure the voice of library supporters is heard.

Maintain communication with key officials and their staff even when you aren’t seeking their support. Keep them informed of library concerns.

Hold an annual recognition event for library advocates, including legislators and business and community leaders who have lent their support. A good day would be the Tuesday of National Library Week when ALA sponsors Thank You Day.

Winning Legislative Advocates

Setting Priorities: The Action Plan

Library advocacy should be tied to the library's overall goals and ongoing public awareness program. To mount an effective advocacy campaign, you must have an action plan with a clear goal and supportive objectives. You must have a clear message and speak with a unified voice. Having an advocacy action plan will save you time and energy. It will also give you a "bigger bang for your buck" by helping you use your resources more efficiently. You will, of course, need to prepare a budget that identifies how much money will be needed to accomplish your goals and where the money will come from. But before you even put your plan on paper, you must know exactly what it is you want. Is it money? A new law or policy? Are you trying to defeat a particular piece of legislation? What will it take to make it happen? Once you have identified your goal(s), you are ready to organize.

Getting organized

Define goals and objectives.

1. **Identify desired outcomes:** new legislation, more funding, greater visibility.
2. **Assess the situation** in targeted areas based on your objectives. Identify barriers/opposition/strengths/potential supporters.
3. **Identify critical tasks.** Key areas include: steering committee, budget, volunteers, coordination of activities with ALA/state association, and fundraising.
4. **Develop a communication plan.** Key elements include: defining the key message, targeting key audiences, and identifying communication strategies and resources needed.
5. **Develop a work plan** with tasks, assignments, and deadlines. Monitor progress regularly.
6. **Document and evaluate results.** This is how you learn to do it better next time.

Shaping the message

Legislators are pulled in many directions as they seek to represent their constituents. A clear understanding of libraries and their impact is necessary for continued support of library issues. Your message should be specific, to the point and identify clear benefits for the legislator's constituents. Be clear about what you are asking the legislator to do (vote for or against a particular measure, persuade other committee members, withdraw support). Narrow your focus and stay with your message. There are many library issues to choose. Support for the Library and Local Government Support Fund (LLGSF) has always been a priority for the Ohio library community (See Appendix for FAQ's). No matter what your message is, provide supporting facts, examples and stories in your communication. As you develop your message, consider the following:

- How will the message benefit/harm the lawmaker's constituents?
- Be able to summarize the message in one minute or less. Time is extremely precious for public officials because of the demands made on them.
- Organize your presentation.
- Be specific – what action do you need from your legislator?
- Be positive – always ask how can we work together?
- Use the "Shape Your Message" worksheet to clarify your message (see Appendix).

Dealing with Legislators

Important Tips on Dealing with Legislators

Start with legislators you know support libraries. Keep them informed as your issue/legislation moves forward.

Get to know the legislative staff. The staff in a legislative office can be very powerful and may even have advantages over member contact. Because of term limits in Ohio, staff may be the ones with institutional memory. Try to talk to the right person; each one has specific issue assignments. Treat them right; they can also prevent you from making necessary contacts with legislators.

Recognize that public officials can't be experts on everything. Be prepared to provide them with information or referral sources.

Stick to one issue. Decision makers do not want to listen to a “laundry list” of issues. They have hectic schedules. As such, they may be late for your meeting or may have to cut it short for a floor vote. Interruptions are not uncommon during a visit.

Don't misinform. If you lie, exaggerate or give false information, a legislator will not appreciate it – and may not forget it.

Do your homework. Find out what you can about an official. Link the library message to something you know that relates to his/her special interest or cause. Suggest ways to work together.

Be personable. Don't be afraid to charm the legislator with your good nature.

Develop relationships of trust with federal as well as local and state lawmakers. A growing number of federal policy issues have a direct impact on libraries and their users.

Maintain contact throughout the year by sending items of interest to your legislator such as the library's newsletter or articles related to his/her special interest. Invite elected officials to your library for a tour or open house (see Appendix: Home Days).

Alert your legislator about any crisis or negative publicity about your library or libraries in general so that he/she hears your side of the issue first hand.

Seal the deal. Be direct about what you want and try to get a commitment.

If your advocacy efforts fail, do not burn bridges. Remember that issues, candidates, and political climates can change. A foe one day may be your best friend the next.

Know Your Legislator

The more you know about a legislator or official, the more effective you can be in communicating the library message. The worksheet in the Appendix can help you target who can be most helpful to your cause as you shape your message and decide who's best (and not) to deliver it.

Remember, you don't need to lobby every legislator to be effective. Certain legislators sway votes because of their leadership positions or because they are considered experts in a particular area. When deciding which constituent groups you want to mobilize, ask yourself:

Who is in leadership that I need to be concerned about?

Policymakers who hold appointments on key committees should be targeted. After all, if your bill doesn't make it out of committee, the rest of the process is irrelevant. Some committees that might be considering issues that affect libraries are:

- 1) Ways and Means
- 2) Appropriations or Finance
- 3) Education
- 4) Urban Affairs

Communicating the Message

Who can be most the most effective communicator?

Selecting the best person to deliver your message can make the difference on whether it is heard. Smart legislative advocates know which legislators are most important and who is most important to those legislators. These carriers must present themselves as credible spokespersons with knowledge of the political process and their role in it (see Appendix: Shaping the Message). They must be able to position libraries as an important force in today's society. The most likely representatives are constituents who care enough to speak out about a particular issue. Other important people are:

Campaign donors who happen to be constituents.

Local opinion leaders such as CEO's elected officials (county executives, sheriff, etc.), other newsmakers, and editors of local media who shape editorial opinions and news coverage.

Potential candidates who may oppose lawmakers in future elections.

The public – Who voted for them? What are the polls in their district saying?

Libraries have just about every kind of person imaginable as users and supporters. Just as politicians rank the importance of certain constituency groups in terms of their value, we need to do the same in order to know who best to champion our cause.

Enlisting Legislative Support

Whether you do it in person, by phone, e-mail or letter, communication is the key to good relations with public officials—not just when your library's funding comes up for a vote, but on a regular basis so the lawmaker can become familiar with library issues and trends. The first step should be a face-to-face meeting if at all possible. Keeping legislators informed about library concerns, trends and successes is the best way to turn them into supporters and even library champions. Invite them to participate in National Library Week, Home Days activities (see Appendix) and special events that showcase the many resources and services available in libraries today. Send letters or e-mails to alert them to library issues you are concerned about. Send the library newsletter and other PR materials. Send a letter highlighting library resources of special interest to a legislator and expressing your desire to be of service. Include a business card with the library's address and telephone number, web site and e-mail. Be sure to thank legislators for their ongoing support. Although many people are intimidated or put off by having to compete for the time and attention of legislators, lobbying or advocating for a particular cause is the American way. Politicians are busy people but they welcome their constituents' input, both as a way of gauging community opinion and learning about issues with which they may not be familiar. The American Library Association maintains a legislative office and Office for Information Technology Policy in Washington, D.C., to help educate legislators and to monitor issues that relate to libraries and information access. To stay current with national issues, subscribe to the ALA Washington Office's electronic newsletter ALAWON.

Effective Delivery Modes

Ways to Communicate

Personal visits

A face-to-face visit with the lawmaker is the most effective means of communication. It is essential to establish a comfortable working relationship with your elected officials. Schedule a meeting when the governing body is not in session, so there is less competition for the legislator's time and attention. Call the local office to make an appointment, if possible at the library so you can highlight "what's happening" in your operation. Always call ahead to reconfirm your appointment (see Tips for Successful Visits).

Telephone calls

Once you have established a relationship, telephone calls are appropriate and easy. Regular contact with staff is possible and desirable. When should you call? Call to ask support before a hearing or floor vote. You also may make an annual call or visit to keep the legislator/staff informed of trends and problems that have surfaced during the year.

Letters

These are the fuel that powers the legislative process. Letters are read. Letters elicit responses. They represent votes. Each letter writer is deemed to represent several like-minded, if less highly motivated, constituents. Letters may be formal or informal, typed or handwritten. They should be composed by you, giving reasons for your position and how it will make a difference for the lawmaker's constituents.

E-mail, fax, telegrams

These are all options, particularly when time is of the essence. Although e-mail is still not popular with some officials, it is growing in acceptance. Follow the Tips for Effective Letters, but keep your message brief. The best option is to call the official's office and ask which method of communication is preferred. It's a good idea to call in advance and keep a list of names and numbers handy for quick action.

Testimony

Occasionally, representatives of the public library community are asked to testify in front of legislative committees. It is a less common and perhaps less effective way to communicate with legislators. However, when called upon to do so, it is important to testify correctly (see Appendix: Tips on Testifying Before Legislative Committees).

The Media

Use the media as a mode of communication. Legislators and their aides monitor hometown newspapers. Any mention of your library – in an editorial, as a featured article, or photos of library programs – can be clipped and sent to your legislator's office. This is an effective way to get noticed.

Tips for Effective Letters

Legislators want to hear from their constituents and to be perceived as responsive. A well-written letter lets them know you care and can provide valuable facts and feedback that help the official take a well-reasoned stand.

- **Use the correct form** of address (see Appendix : Forms of Address).
- **Identify yourself.** If you are writing as a member of your library's board of trustees, as a public librarian, officer of the Friends, etc., say so.
- **Write most frequently to your own legislator.** If writing to other legislators, send a copy to your own legislator.
- **State why** you are coming forward. Let your elected officials know you believe all types of libraries are central to our democracy and that you are counting on them to make sure that all libraries—public, school and academic— have adequate funds and resources.
- **Be specific and limit your letter to one issue.** Cite a bill number or other identifying information. Give examples. If budget cuts have forced your library to cut materials budgets or if your library has cut service hours, say so.
- **Ask for a specific action** i.e., request to sponsor a bill or vote for/against an issue.
- **Show interest in the legislator's record if appropriate.** Make reference to legislation that he/she has written or sponsored.
- **Write from the heart.** Avoid clichés. Form letters that look like they're part of an organized pressure campaign don't have as much impact as a personal letter.
- **Focus on people who count on library services.** Include real-life stories or examples of how the library makes a difference. Collect data and use a few well-chosen statistics.
- **Be brief.** A one-page letter is easier to read – and more likely to be read.
- **Be sure to include your name,** mailing address, telephone number and e-mail address in the letter, not just on the envelope.
- **Compound your letter's impact** by sending copies to city officials, members of Congress, and other key figures in your community.
- **Be strategic.** Know the budget cycles for various governing bodies. Send letters early to maximize their impact. ALA and OLC will issue action alerts on timely issues.

Tips for Successful Visits

Preparation is key to a successful legislative visit. That means having the right message delivered to the right legislator by the right advocate at the right time. While sympathetic, some legislators may ask some hard questions.

- **Keep the delegation** – of librarians, trustees, Friends, supporters – small enough for an easy exchange of views. At least one person should be a constituent. Designate a chief spokesperson and decide, in advance, who will speak when and what he/she will say.
- **Be on time.** Legislators' schedules are hectic. If you are late, you may miss your window of opportunity.
- **Be sure to give or include a specific message** about the library in the legislator's home state or community.
- **Dress comfortably and professionally.** It may be a long day of visits, but you need to be alert and fresh for each one.
- **Be positive.** Most legislators and staff are hard working, whether or not they agree with you on the issues. Don't convey negative attitudes about politics or politicians.
- **Know your message.** Refer to local library and constituent needs. Small talk is fine, but don't allow yourself to be distracted by talking about the weather or mutual acquaintances. Stay focused.
- **Be assertive but polite.** Ask, don't threaten or demand.
- **Remain calm, no matter what.** If a legislator asks difficult questions on such issues as freedom of information in libraries, try saying, "This is an important issue. Could I quickly run through the rest of these points and then come back to this. We'd really like to get your point of view." Most legislators will accept this approach. If he or she insists on proceeding, practice techniques for handling tough or hostile questions.
- **Don't get discouraged.** If the legislator is called away and a staff member takes over, use the opportunity to become better acquainted. Staff members often have considerable influence and are more accessible.
- **Be appreciative.** Express your thanks for past support, as well as asking for help with current issues.
- **Don't overstay your welcome.** Offer to answer additional questions. Leave your card and briefing materials.
- **Follow up with a thank-you letter** and additional information. If appropriate, let the ALA Washington Office or OLC know the result of your visit.

Media Relations

Media relations should be an ongoing responsibility in every public library. Every library should provide each newspaper and electronic news outlet with an "Editorial Packet." This packet should include general information about your public library. Information should include:

1. Name, address, phone number, fax number, email address, and web site of the library
2. Name and phone number of the director
3. Board of trustees' names, phone numbers, and outside affiliations
4. Regularly scheduled board meeting times and locations
5. Library hours
6. Branch locations
7. Statistical information

Use the Editorial Packet as an opportunity to include any promotional materials that you have or fliers on special events. Make an appointment with the editor(s) of your local paper(s) and electronic media outlets. Take along a member of your board of trustees. Review the materials with the editor. Make sure you send the editor any updates to the information, new trustee appointments, hours, changes, etc.

Press Releases

A press release can be used to take a very public position on a library issue. Legislators will take a great deal of interest in information that they read about in their local newspapers. Press releases, for the purposes of grassroots lobbying, must go beyond the weekly releases of library activity schedules. Although that information is a valuable service to the community, it has no legislative value. However, press releases that generate a good story about specific programs have a great deal of positive impact on legislators. Try developing a press release on a specific program at least once a month. The release should be written concisely. The most important information should appear in the first paragraph, with the rest of the information provided in descending order of importance. Editors will usually cut paragraphs from the end of the release to fit it into the available space. Try and answer the "five w's" who, what, when, where, and why in the first few paragraphs. Include "how" if appropriate. Keep your sentences and paragraphs brief. Get everything on two pages.

Letters to the Editor

Letters to the editor can be helpful. However, on certain controversial subjects, they may trigger a firestorm of unwanted attention. If you are promoting a positive "letters to the editor" campaign, make sure that the letters are short and cover only one subject. These letters make the greatest impact if they use specific examples to make a point. Remember you must always sign your name and include your address and phone number. It is wise to check with your newspaper to determine their policy on printing letters to the editor.

Staying Connected: A Plan for Staying Politically Fit

Advocacy efforts should continue year-round. As with most things though, timing is everything. To be effective, you must familiarize yourself with the various stages of the legislative process, which can be lengthy.

Legislative Action Schedule

Six to eight months before sessions:

- Meet in your district.
- Compile pertinent local data.
- Offer model language/concise legislation.
- Train advocates.
- Invite potential supporters to the library.
- Identify allies/collaborators.
- When the session/budget cycle begins: Look for the library provisions in proposed legislation.
- Lobby to amend or delete unacceptable language/concepts.
- Visit legislative offices when you need to provide information/educate.
- Monitor library legislation and keep advocates informed.
- Know when appropriate committees are meeting and time your visits and media outreach, i.e., op-eds, editorial board meetings, letters-to-the-editor, accordingly.

Throughout the session:

- Indicate your preferences on legislation of concern.
- Learn from your mistakes and adjust your strategy.
- Ask for feedback.

After the session ends:

- Attend fundraisers.
- Thank the legislator(s).
- Invite lawmakers to visit the library (see Appendix: Home Days).
- Give recognition awards and gear up for re-election time.

Before re-election time:

- Volunteer to help during re-election time.
- Identify key legislators/policymakers who supported you.
- Invite candidates to the library to meet staff/users/advocates.
- Organize and publicize the library agenda.
- Encourage candidates to include libraries in their “platform.”
- Cultivate relationships with policymakers and key constituents.

During primary and general elections:

- Work behind the scenes.
- Focus on key committees and get to know their members’ interests and priorities.
- Maintain informal but ongoing contact with public officials.
- Continually introduce yourself and identify your issues.

Final Summary: An effective legislative advocate

- Maintains contact with key legislators.
- Knows how to shape the message for legislators.
- Knows who can get to key decision makers.
- Understands the importance of timing.
- Writes effective communications.
- Informs and educates.
- Always says thank you.

Resources for Further Information

Print materials:

Hall, Richard B. Winning Library Referenda Campaigns. New York: Neal Schuman, 1995.

This manual presents a smorgasbord of suggestions and ideas for developing a successful campaign strategy.

Ohio Library Council, Government Relations committee. Ballot Handbook. Columbus: OLC, 1998.

The ins and outs of how to run a successful levy campaign while complying with Ohio election law.

Reed, Sally Gardner. Making the Case for Your Library. New York: Neal Schuman, 2001.

How to use traditional promotional materials and techniques to make your library important to everyone in the community, including legislators.

Turner, Anne. M. Getting political; an action guide for librarians and library supporters. New York: Neal Schuman, 1997.

One of the best lobbying 101 and advocacy guides available.

Web resources and links

National

Advanced Consulting. www.advocacyguru.com

This consulting firm provides great information on its web page on advocating issues at the federal level. The author is a former congressional aid.

American Library Association has support materials on its web site:

Library Advocates Handbook www.ala.org/pio/advocacy

This basic lobbying tool was revised in 2000. Parts of it have been incorporated into this guide with permission

Technology Policy Issues (ALA's Office for Information Technology Policy) www.ala.org/oitp

This site has statements and advice on technology topics such as e-rate, UCITA, copyright, digital divide.

ALA's CIPA website (Children's Internet Protection Act. www.ala.org/cipa

Up-to-date information on current trial and advice on how to comply with this controversial law.

LSTA Success stories. <https://cs.ala.org/lsta>

These stories of successful LSTA projects answer the question "Why fund libraries?"

The Librarian's guide to Cyberspace for Parents and Kids. <http://www.ala.org/pio/cyber/cando.html>

This is a great guide for effectively advocating safe surfing and the need for libraries and librarians in an information society.

Illinois Library Association: Library advocacy: Influencing Decision Makers

<http://64.27.85.114/advocacy/advocacy.htm>.

This on-line brochure developed by the Illinois Library Association focuses on the need for more sophisticated legislative advocacy on behalf of librarians.

Libraries for the Future Foundation. www.lff.org.

This non-profit organization's mission is to build the capacities of libraries to carry out their historical mission in an interactive environment.

Project Vote Smart. www.vote-smart.org.

This is a great site for information on federal legislators. Provides voting records, issue statements, poll ratings.

Roll Call. www.rollcall.com

This site is considered one of the leading sources for congressional news and information both inside the beltway and beyond. It provides a platform for members of Congress to communicate with one another. Great archive of political cartoons.

Statepulse. www.statepulse.com.

This commercial site is a portal to political and government information for each state. Includes links on lobbying, campaign finance, election services, press links and more.

Staying Connected. www.gatesfoundation.org/libraries/uslibraryprogram

A toolkit of activities designed to help libraries engage local communities in their technology programs and enlist their help in sustaining them. The kit includes examples of unique and successful programs created by libraries from around the country.

Ohio

The League of Women Voters of Ohio. www.lwvohio.org.

This web site provides general election information and position stands on statewide issues.

Ohio Capital Connection. www.ohcapcon.com.

An Ohiolink and OPLIN research database. Inclusive information and full text of Ohio House and Senate bills. A good starting point when researching a state official.

Ohio Citizen Action. www.ohiocitizen.org.

This large organization of over 100,000 members provides information on statewide issues: a do-it-yourself politics approach to educating the public and effecting political change.

Secretary of State of Ohio. Campaign finance electronic filing. www.state.oh.us/sos

Which special interest groups or individuals have contributed to a candidate? State law requires that all statewide candidates who receive more than \$10,000 in total contributions or make more than \$10,000 in expenditures during a reporting period file electronically with the Secretary of State.

Appendix

Shaping the Message Worksheet

Collecting Library Stories Worksheet

Know Your Legislator Worksheet

Factors Considered by Legislators When Voting

How a Bill Becomes a Law

Key Questions Addressed in an Analysis of Bill

FAQ on the Library & Local Government Fund (LLGSF)

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Forms of Address

Home Days

Libraries in Context: A Top Ten List

Ohio's Library System: Putting it all together

Shaping the Message Worksheet

The issue:

The message is: (25 words or less)

Three key points:

1.

2.

3.

This is important to your constituents because:

We need you to: (call for action)

Collecting Library Stories Worksheet

Legislators need and want to know how the libraries are used and viewed by their constituents.

Use this worksheet to document human interest stories to share with your legislator. Collect stories that emphasize the importance of library services in your community and the impact of your library on residents.

Which library service(s) were most evident in this library experience?

Who was served by the library?

(Note type of patron: adult, young adult, or child patron, staff, business/local need, etc.)

Tell the library story:

The following information is optional.

Although the library story is of key importance, contact information about the person(s) in the library story may be needed for further clarification.

Name of library user:

Address:

Telephone:

E-mail address:

Know Your Legislator Worksheet

Name of official:

Position on libraries:

District:

Voting record:

Political party:

Political philosophy :
(liberal, conservative, moderate)

Committee Assignments:

Date first elected:

Library connections:
(family, friends, advocates)

Placement on seniority scale:

Political experience:
(chairmanships, committee memberships, other elected or appointed positions)

Key supporters/campaign contributors:
(seniors, labor, business, education, etc.)

Key areas of concern:

Who should deliver the message? How?

Factors Considered by Legislators When Voting

Personal Philosophy

Personal/Family

Issues Perceived

Views of Constituents

Public Interest Party

Leadership Party

Caucus Minority

Caucus

Other Legislators

Special Interests

Major Funders of Political Campaigns

Organized Support or Opposition

Fiscal Implications

Potential for Passage

Constitutionality

Potential Effectiveness

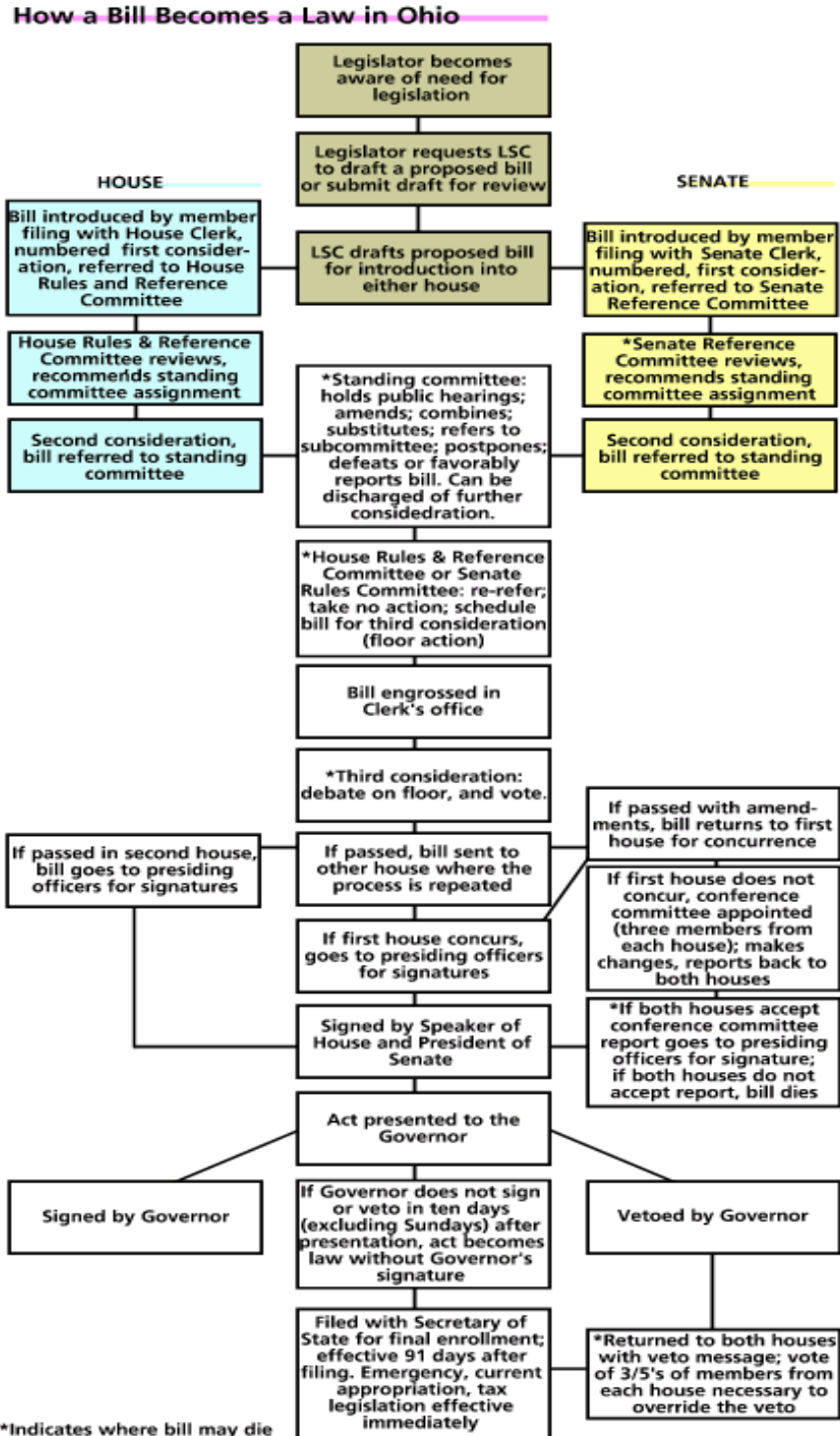
Staff's Views

Floor Debate

Media Attention

How a Bill Becomes a Law in Ohio

Below is a flow chart demonstrating how a bill becomes a law, taken from “A Guidebook for Ohio Legislators” published by the Legislative Service Commission. <http://www.legislature.state.oh.us/process.cfm>



Key Questions Addressed in an Analysis of Bill

1. What problem(s) does the bill address?
2. What solution(s) does it propose?
3. What are the positive (pros) and negatives (cons) of the bill?
4. What is the legislative history of this bill?
 - a. Has it been introduced before?
 - b. What are the differences from past bills?
 - c. Are the sponsors the same?
 - d. What happened to the previous bill(s)?
 - e. Were amendments made to previous bills?
 - f. Which interest groups supported the bill and which groups opposed it?
 - g. How has the legislature, including key committees, changed since the last introduction?
5. What are the potential effects of the proposed legislation?
 - a. Programmatic?
 - b. Financial?
 - c. Political?
6. What is the feasibility of the bill's passage?
 - a. Which interest groups have the most influence?
 - b. What credibility does the sponsor have?
 - c. How likely is the sponsor to *actively* support the bill?
 - d. What is the focus and extent of attention of the media in the legislation?
7. Is there a companion bill?
 - a. Considering its sponsorship and committee assignment, does the companion bill have a better chance of getting to the floor for consideration?
8. What is your library's position on the bill?
 - a. Support
 - b. Support with amendments
 - c. Support the concept but not the bill
 - d. Oppose
 - e. No position

FAQ on the Library & Local Government Fund (LLGSF)

What is LLGSF?

The Library and Local Government Support fund is the principal source of financial support for Ohio's public libraries. It is derived from a portion of the state budget which is the equivalent of 5.7 percent of the current year's personal income tax. The LLGSF legislation provides a formula for the distribution of the fund that includes an equalization component. Over the past 15 years, this equalization portion has reduced the funding gap between the wealthiest and poorest library districts. The LLGSF replaced the intangibles tax, that in most areas was inadequate for library funding, and repealed by the General Assembly in 1986. Three-fourths of Ohio's library systems are completely dependent on the LLGSF.

Why is this fund the best approach to funding public libraries?

It provides a stable funding base and the potential for all library budgets to grow as economic conditions in the state permit.

The LLGSF generates more financial resources for public libraries than other funding sources and ensures that those resources will be distributed more equitably in both urban and rural communities.

It enables libraries to plan for and implement new programs and purchase new materials, including new technology and equipment, to serve all Ohioans better.

What are the benefits of the LLGSF?

It provides Ohioans in communities throughout the state with greater access to the resources of public libraries. This access has allowed residents to expand their knowledge, find a job, improve their education, bring in business, explore new worlds, enjoy previously unavailable materials and connect with people, just to name a few.

Tips on Testifying Before Legislative Committees

If you are testifying as part of a “team,” make sure you have coordinated your testimony and do not repeat points made by others. Make sure you arrive at the hearing well before the scheduled time. You will need to fill out a witness slip that should be at the speaker’s podium. Give the copies of your testimony to the Chair of the Committee’s secretary prior to the start of the hearing so that the copies can be distributed prior to the hearing.

Begin with “Mister (or Madam) Chairman and Members of the Committee” when addressing the committee. Then identify yourself and your library.

Approach members of the Committee in a way that emphasizes common interest. Convey the notion that they are reasonable individuals who want to do the “right thing.”

Deliver testimony that evokes an emotional response without offending committee members. This is an effective way to complement a solely rational testimony.

Use real, library stories to heighten the impact of your testimony.

Be prepared. Know your message, but also know your subject so that you can answer questions. If you do not know the answer to a question, defer to a colleague who is present or offer to supply the information as soon as possible.

Rephrase questions that emphasize weaknesses in your testimony so that you speak to strong points instead.

Know the committee members. Understand the makeup of the committee in terms of your issue. Know your foes as well as your allies.

Put your testimony in writing and bring enough copies to distribute to the committee, legislative staff, or media.

Be brief. Keep your testimony to 3-5 minutes. If you read your testimony, give a copy to the committee secretary at the conclusion of your testimony.

Be patient as you wait your turn. Committee chairs typically allow persons from out of town to testify sooner than others.

Refer to page and line numbers if testifying about specific portions of a bill.

Be polite and respond courteously to all questions and challenges.

Don’t use excessive library jargon; it may confuse committee members.

Coordinate your testimony with other testifiers who support your position. Coordinate your testimony with the primary sponsor of the bill if you are speaking in favor of it.

Don’t be intimidated. Your personal and professional experiences make you the expert. You have information that needs to be shared with the committee.

When you have completed your testimony, it is appropriate to say, “Mr. (or Madame) Chairman (woman) I would be pleased to answer any questions you or members of the committee may have.”

You will notice that the members of the committee ask their questions “through the chair”. They will say, “Mr. Chairman, Ms. Smith, can you please tell me ...” You should likewise respond through the Chair, “Mr. Chairman, Senator Jones, ...” The Chairman will excuse you when they have finished their questions.

Forms of Address

The President of the United States
The White House
Washington, DC 20500
E-mail: president@whitehouse.gov

The Vice President of the United States
Executive Office
Washington, DC 20500
E-mail: vice.president@whitehouse.gov

Congress

Note: For e-mail addresses, see the legislator's web site or the ALA Legislative Action Center at <http://congress.nw.dc.us/ala/index.pl/>.

Senators:

The Honorable _____
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Representatives:

The Honorable _____
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

State

Governors and Lieutenant Governors:

The Honorable _____
Governor (Lt. Governor) of the
State
State Capital
City/State/ZIP

Legislators:

The Honorable _____
The Statehouse
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Home Days: How to Get Started

The goal of Home Days is to get all 132 Ohio legislators into the libraries in their district in order to see for themselves the quality services, valuable tools, and technological impact their library holds for the community. In this packet are different ways to introduce your library to your legislator. Choose one of these formats and incorporate the following to maximize the effectiveness for your legislator and the media.

- Identify a target list of people to invite to a Home Days activity, including trustees, Friends of the Library, local and county elected officials, and key business and education professionals.
- Coordinate your Home Days activities with other libraries in your legislative district or county so you are not competing with other libraries for your legislator's time.
- Choose a day that ensures high attendance (National Library Week Children's Book Week, or other large programming event).
- Draft and distribute a news release to announce the event. Follow-up afterward with a detailed story in the local paper about the event, accompanied by pictures and captions.
- Utilize the services of the Ohio Library Council and its Government Relations Committee.
- Please forward pictures of the event to the Ohio Library Council.
- Remember, Home Days should not be focused on the event you host; instead, the emphasis should be on who you have attend the event.

Mansfield/Richland County Home Days

Each year, the Mansfield/Richland County Public Library hosts a State-of-the-Library luncheon. Approximately 75 people attended the 2002 event. Attendees included state legislators, elected officials from county and local community governments, civic leaders from all over Richland County, members of the Library Board of Trustees and Friends of the Library and representatives of the library staff.

Library staff and board members conducted a tour of the library for officials. Highlights of the tour included the very popular 12-station computer lab funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; the Sherman room, which houses the library's extensive collection of local history documents and genealogy records; the children's department; the automation department and technical services.

A barbecue luncheon was served in the Library's community room, followed by a presentation including a recap of the library's recent accomplishments and a virtual tour of the eight branches via the library website.

Home Days: Events

The following are programs/events that could provide the appropriate setting for hosting your legislator:

- **Open House.** Host a theme open house each season (e.g., in October have a ghost story reading for families; in December, celebrate an old-fashioned English Christmas based on Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*). Provide tours and a brief synopsis of the services the library offers.
- **Library Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner.** Invite your legislator and other influential community members.
- **Behind the Scenes Tour.** Demonstrate the services you provide. Offer a ride on the bookmobile or visit your Outreach staff in action at the senior center.
- **Candidates Forum.** Host a forum of local candidates seeking office prior to the general election.
- **County/District Bus Tour.** Visit all of the libraries in the legislator's district.
- **Constituent Meeting Place.** Host a monthly meeting at which your legislator can update constituents on events in Columbus.
- **Annual Friends of the Library Meeting.** Ask your legislator to speak.
- **Customer Appreciation Days.** Present the legislator an award for his/her hard work on behalf of libraries.
- **OhioReads.** Provide information on your library's OhioReads grant program. Emphasize the community collaboration involved in the project and the leadership role provided by your library.
- **Partnership/Collaboration Tour.** Take your legislator to meet your community partners who are helping to promote the library's message.
- **Personal Librarian.** Assign a librarian to work specifically with the legislator and his/her staff on local issues. Send out a letter introducing the librarian and give examples of research and local demographics that can be accessed easily through a phone call to this librarian.
- **Community Recognition.** Lobby local officials to adopt resolutions or to offer proclamations recognizing your library for its efforts within the community. Issue press releases promoting the recognition and provide copies to your legislators.

Libraries in Context: A Top Ten List

1. Everyone loves to love libraries.
2. Lawmakers especially like to love libraries in their district, even if they don't support library issues and policies.
3. Put library issues in terms they understand.
4. Make sure someone cares about libraries as libraries.
5. Members/staff like to get away with doing as little as possible. Don't let them.
6. A corollary: make it easy for them to do the right thing. Do their homework.
7. Make sure they understand the facts.
8. Deal with the Dr. Laura's of the world. Alert legislators and tell them why it isn't so.
9. A word about campaigns – grassroots support trumps money every time.
10. Legislators and their staff are people too.

From : “How to get elected officials to do what you want!” presentation by Stephanie Vance, AdVance Consulting. 2002 PLA Annual Conference, Phoenix, Az.

Ohio's Library System: Putting it all together

