



Pennsylvania School Librarians Association

Strategies for Contacting Your State Legislators

WHEN? Best to contact your representative(s) while they are in their district offices (not in Harrisburg). Call their office to find out when he or she will be available locally.

HOW? Email first about the legislation (include the URL) and the “ask” (signing the co-sponsorship memo), then follow-up with either a call or a call to schedule a visit. This gives the legislator time to read the co-sponsorship memoranda.

(<http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/Legis/CSM/showMemoPublic.cfm?chamber=H&SPick=20170&cosponId=22917>)

WHERE? Visit the district office after school and take a colleague, teacher, or parent with you to give an additional perspective. Be respectful of time and plan no more than a 10-minute visit.

WHAT TO SAY?

Phone Call

Ask if the legislator received the email and link you sent to the co-sponsorship memo. [Note: you will likely be speaking to an aide and that’s OK.] If the person you are speaking to is unsure, ask for his/her email and say you will send the link now and ask them to read the memo and call you back. During a call back, briefly give 2-3 talking points and ask if the legislator intends to sign the memo. If you do not get an answer, call back a week later and repeat.

Visit

If you are taking others with you, decide who will discuss which points. Be organized. Refer to the ***Template for Preparing a Conversation with Your Legislator*** to jot notes. However, the basic steps are as follows.

- Introduce yourself (and any others who are with you) and where you work/what you do or your role (parent, teacher, librarian, etc.) If you have business cards, use them and collect one from the legislator.
- State the purpose of your visit – “Seeking your commitment to sign the so-sponsorship memo...”
- Think of an interesting “hook” to get your legislator’s attention to the issue.
- Have 2 – 3 talking points ready that resonate with the legislator and some supporting evidence in case you are asked for more details. Refer to the document, ***Talking Points and Evidence for the “One Certified Librarian Per Public School” Legislative Campaign*** for talking points you can use.
- Restate your “ask” (the purpose for your visit) and for his/her support.
- Leave a one-page handout with talking points and your contact info. (Optionally, you can give this to the legislator when you begin to talk about the points.)

- Thank him/her and if the legislator will not commit, state that you will call in the future or send more info to see if he/she has reconsidered.
- Particularly, if there is time and the legislator commits to supporting the bill, ask an aide to take a photo of you with the legislator.
- Tweet the photo and response using #1LibrnPerSchool or email the photo to me, and I will post them in Schoology or tweet it.

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