



# Legislators & Libraries:

## A Guide for Maintaining & Enhancing Communications

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Helping legislators understand library issues and concerns begins with updating their mental pictures of libraries. Not every elected official is a regular library user, so it makes sense to invite Legislators into libraries to show them what we do and to give them a snapshot of what libraries are currently like.

Use the calendar as a planning guide, and keep the following general points in mind:

- Summer is the least busy time for state legislators.
- Consider having your guest take part in a summer reading program, story time or an early learning activity.
- Extend invitations through legislative staff, so you know the date and time gets recorded.
- Give an opportunity for the senator or representative to speak if possible, such as at a meeting or community gathering.
- Show off services or programs your library is particularly proud of or good at!
- Avoid discussions of political topics or particular legislation, unless asked. Summer should be considered "off time," unless a legislator asks your opinion of a specific item.
- Be sure to follow up after the visit with a thank you card, including pictures if any were taken.
- Contact the WLA Office for more information or for advice on specific legislators.
- Make it fun – if you're relaxed, your guests will be too!

### Planning Calendar

#### **January, February & March**

Attend Library Day in Olympia and bring your Friends & Trustees!

#### **April / May**

Query WLA Office about issues that will carry into the next legislative session.

Identify opportunities, events or activities to invite a legislator to your library during the summer.

#### **June / July**

Extend invitation to legislator to visit your library via legislative staff.

Use more than one method (i.e. phone call **plus** follow-up letter; email **plus** follow-up phone call).

#### **July / August**

Conduct library visits.

#### **November**

Follow elections to identify or confirm the legislators in your district or districts.

#### **December**

Promote Library Day in Olympia dates with your staff, Friends & Trustees.