

February 26, 2009

WASHINGTON STATE PTA FOCUS DAY Guide to a Successful Legislative Advocacy Visit

Meeting with your Legislators or their staff and developing a relationship is the most effective ways to influence your legislator's positions on issues. Phone calls, faxes, emails, and letters are all important, but not as effective as a face-to-face meeting. The tips provided below can be used anytime, not just Focus Day. It often takes several visits with legislators or their staff to influence their position on a bill – today is a step in the long process.

Make an Appointment	Know your legislator's record	Be punctual and positive	Focus the meeting
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have/Keep an appointment – don't just show up.• A broad based coalition of constituents (five or more) is most effective.• Make sure to have provided your contact information – schedules change fast on the hill, and you may be asked to move your appointment, but usually its just five or ten minutes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information on your legislator's previous votes is available at: www.leg.wa.gov .• Also check which bills your legislator has sponsored. This can be found on their individual webpage:• Pre-format comments about favorable and not-so-favorable votes. <u>Always</u> be polite and respectful.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be on time, and thank the staff person for his or her time.• Even if you disagree on most issues, compliment your legislator on a vote, comment, or activity that you appreciate.• If you are in complete disagreement, compliment them on their commitment to public service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Briefly introduce the individuals in the group, the WSPTA and local units you represent, and the topic you wish to discuss.• It is important to only speak about one issue at a time, and stay on topic.• Remember, you don't have to be an expert. Legislators are elected because they represent you.
Listen and gather information	Make a specific request	Follow up	Express your thanks
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask for your legislator's position on the issue you are discussing.• Be patient, and be passionate.• <u>Don't react negatively</u> if you get an answer or comment you don't like.• Always remain polite and respectful.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rather than being generic, such as please fully fund education, a more effective 'ask' is to request action on a specific bill. If there is no bill, ask that they introduce such a bill.• Give concrete examples of why the bill should be supported or introduced.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tell the staff person you will get back with him or her if you cannot provide information during your visit, or any resources you agreed to provide. <u>Then do it</u>• Send a note card thanking them for the visit; make sure you include any commitments or statements they made during your visit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• At the end of the meeting thank both the legislator and staff for their time.• Acknowledge how busy everyone is during session, and you appreciate them 'fitting you in.'• Don't forget to thank those in your group that agreed to attend, especially first-timers!

If someone asks you a question, and you don't know the answer – just say:
"I don't know the answer, but I'll find out and get back to you." And do.

WSPTA Focus Day 2009

WSPTA is a non-partisan, not-for-profit, child advocacy organization – be equal, fair, open and welcoming.

WA Government Stats

- 49 Legislative Districts, each has
 - 1 Senator (4yr term)
 - 2 Representatives (2yr t.)
- Governor (4yr term)
- Leg. Session: Jan
- 295 School Districts

WSPTA Info

- 150,000+ members statewide in 13 Regions
- President: *Laura Bay* - ptapres@wastatepta.org
- Legislative Dir: *Paul Cheek* - ptalegdir@wastatepta.org
- Lobbyist: *Donna Christensen* - DonnaRChris@aol.com
- Advocacy Coord.: *Kim Howard* - khoward@wastatepta.org
- Focus Day Chairs: *Byron Shutz* - bcshutz@comcast.net
Shelley Kloba - shelley@kloba.com

What to Do On Focus Day

- Join the noontime Rally On The Steps: Hear guest speakers, including the Governor, BEF members, and key legislators, on the south steps of the Legislative Building (Capital Dome).
- Consider asking your RLC to make an appointment to meet your home or school district legislators.
- Participate in the activities in the Columbia Room (basement of the Leg. Bldg.).
- Attend legislative hearings (TBD) or watch a Session from the Chamber Balcony Gallery (TBD).
- Meet and talk with fellow advocates – network, network, network.
- Be visible – wear your WSPTA buttons, display your blue WSPTA folder, talk about Priority Issues.
- Fill out a Legislator Contact Report form to forward helpful info from each legislator conversation.

What to Know About Today

- It is another full, busy day for the Legislature. So, go with the flow and know that:
 - Both the Senate and House are on their Chamber floors doing the work of government.
 - Feb ??th was the last day to read in committee reports from House fiscal committees and Senate Ways & Means and the Transportation committees.
 - Feb. ??th is the last day for bills to be considered in house of origin.
- Be gracious and outstandingly hospitable, yet persistent --- be helpful in letting your legislators want to make WSPTA priorities their top bill too.
- Being honest, sincere and polite leaves the best message. Use your judgment and common sense – you aren't expected to know it all, say when you don't; ask questions - listen to the answers.
- Patience is a virtue (even when it's pressed hard!). Schedules may be off, meetings may be delayed or cut short. You may have to wait, and then just to find out the meeting is cancelled.

Where To Go Today - These buildings are in the SW corner of the campus.

LEG - Legislative Building (the Capital Dome Bldg)

Columbia Room – basement (WSPTA's H.Q.)
South Steps – gather for the noontime Rally
Governor's Office – upper main floor
Senate Offices - upper floors
House Representatives offices - upper floors
Senate Chamber (audience balcony above)
House Chamber (audience balcony above)
Legislative Info Center
Visitor Services and Capitol Tours

JLOB – John L. O'Brien Building

House Representatives offices
House Hearing Rooms

JAC - John A. Cherberg Building

Senate Hearing Rooms
Senate Democratic offices

INB - Irv Newhouse Building

Senate Republican offices

Pritchard Building

Public Cafeteria
Legislative Service Center