

Practical Tips for Attending and Enjoying Your Focus Day '09 Rally in Olympia Thursday Feb 26, 2009

Updated February 21, 2009

An overview of many helpful details to know before you go

- The most current FD-09 Resources are available online – see the links at the bottom of last page; often the most current file may be available sooner at the FWS site.
- The main event is the 12:00 noon Rally - north steps of the Capitol Dome bldg.

Getting To Olympia:

- Drivers and Carpools: Get driving directions, parking info and a Campus map off the WA Gov website - <http://www.ga.wa.gov/Park/visitor.htm> (also on the WSPTA website – directions are on the back). Parking is 50-cents per hour – bring lots of \$1 bills and quarters. Most parking is uncovered surface lots; there is shuttle service to the more outlying parking. Make a sign to put in a window so riders can find the car afterwards.
- Chartered Bus Riders: Some councils and regions have organized chartered buses for their members; buses are usually quite comfortable, have a bathroom, and make good time in traffic. Be on time to your designated morning gathering spot, and at pick-up spot afterwards. At the Capital you will likely be dropped and picked up on one of the Diagonal Streets leading to the centrally located Winged Victory Monument, to the NE of the Legislative Building. Be sure to know when & where to meet back at your bus – remember what your bus looks like – make an ID sign to put in its window.

Dress Appropriately: Color of the day is **Basic Blue** (ok, any bright & distinctive blue!) -- try to wear some outer clothing this color to more readily identify you as a member of the advocacy Rally! Legislative professionals will be wearing formal business attire – please dress professionally too (i.e. gentleman wear coat & tie, etc). We are advocates with serious issues going before formal governmental leadership of whom we are requesting respect and demonstrating our regard. That said, dress appropriately for the weather to stand outside in the cold on the Steps *for an hour*; wear comfortable shoes!

What To Bring: You may wish to have none, some, or all of these things: cell phone; digital camera, pens & paper; business cards or contact info; umbrella; leave-behinds for legislator(s). Small carrying bags or backpacks are recommended.

Food & Drink: Often best to bring your own refreshments and lunch for the entire day. There is a food bar with tables in the Leg. Bldg., and a full cafeteria with tables in the Pritchard Building (150 yds south of the Leg. Bldg.)

Upon Arrival at the Capital Campus: In the morning, go to our Welcome Table area in the hallway by the Columbia Room in the basement of the Legislative Building. (the Capitol Dome Bldg.; the east & south entrances are easiest). On the way in – on the East Patio are volunteers helping to make signs to carry at the noontime Rally – make your own sign (*or print and bring 8x11 message to paste on*), or grab one to go!

Packet Received at Welcome Table: You may receive a WSPTA folder “packet” at the Welcome Table near the Columbia Room / Leg. Bldg. Pick up a packet, meet up with fellow members; may check the schedule posted for any potential pre-arranged appointments with your legislators. Packet contains basic info you will need for the day: *Agenda, Campus Map, - other items to be determined, including a ‘leave-behind’ card to fill out and leave with your legislator(s) if you go see them or their Leg. Assistant.*

“Headquarters” - The Columbia Room: Our central meeting place, open 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM; located in the Legislative Building. All our major group events will occur here. We will have the exclusive use of the room for the day – meet, greet and eat here. Store possessions there with discretion – no security implied, no liability assumed.

About the Day – It’s the Noontime Rally: WSPTA is a non-partisan, not-for-profit organization comprised of members representing a wide diversity of views – be equal, fair, open and welcoming. Know the basic advocacy rules – see the *WSPTA Advocacy & Legislation Handbook* and our other website resources.

- At Welcome Table, look for updates on the day, including the Agenda, Campus activities such as hearings, and a potential Legislator Appointment Schedule List.
- Get situated and acclimatize to the day at the Focus Day Welcome, Intro and Overview from by Pres. Laura Bay and Leg. Dir. Paul Cheek – see Agenda for time.
- By 11:45, have arrived and be prepared to gather for an hour+plus upon the north steps of the Legislative Building (Capitol Dome) which face the Courthouse --.
- **12:00 Noon Rally – be on the north steps area of the Legislative Building** – the Capitol Dome – to hear Guest Speakers: the Governor, key legislators, and more.
- Attend after-Rally presentations / discussions in the Columbia Room.
- Be visible – wear your WSPTA stickers, display your blue WSPTA folder, talk about priority issues to share knowledge and let others hear your conversations.
- Meet and talk with fellow WSPTA advocates – network, network, network.
- This phase of the Session is heavily occupied with bill approval processes and hearings are not normally scheduled, but there may be hearings later in the day you can attend, or you may be able to listen in the chamber galleries to floor votes. Any times and listings will be posted as available at Check-In.

About Legislator Appointments & Contact: The day will be different this year – *few if any appointments have been set up* by your RLCs in order to *focus on the Rally.*

- If you do meet with a legislator or aid, please fill out and return a Legislator Contact Report form (in the packet you’ll receive at Check-In or available online) to forward relevant info to our Advocacy Coordinator Kim Howard.
- It will be another busy, full day for the Legislature –actually busier than usual due to the phase in the bill approval process -- legislators will understandably have pressing priorities beyond meeting with constituents. So, go with the flow and know that the legislators are on their Chamber floors doing the work of government.
- Always be on time and keep the appointment – legislators get all the slack today, we get the responsibility.

- Be ready to speak with legislative assistant. You may leave a message, note or a leave-behind with them. Treat the Assistant as interchangeable with the Legislator – they make things happen.
- A legislator may be pulled off the floor to meet with you – this process *may* be explained at the overview presentation and a handout is available online – this request should be used judiciously.
- Understand the basics of the Top 5 Issues (lots of info on the WSPTA Leg. webpage). Its OK to know just one issue well enough to ask one question or give one example of how it impacts you.
- Legislators are people too – they have the same anxiety over unknowns – they *are* expected to know a lot but often don't. Help them as you would want help.
- Being honest, sincere and polite leaves the best message. Use your judgment and common sense – you are not expected to know it all, so say when you don't; ask questions - listen to answers. *Be excellent listeners*. Follow-up on any promise made.
- Patience is a virtue (even when it's pressed hard!). Meetings may be delayed or cut short. You may have to wait, wait some more, and then find the meeting is cancelled.
- Be gracious and outstandingly hospitable, yet persistent --- be helpful in letting your legislators want to make WSPTA priorities one of their top bills too.

Confirm a Contingency Plan-B: For both appointments with legislators and with your cohorts, have an understanding for alternative plans if things change. Exchange cell phone numbers; have a rough idea of how you'll regroup if schedules collapse or if you get lost and run late, etc.

Virtual Participation: Tell your friends unable to go to Olympia to participate virtually in the collective effort: a) Go to WSPTA's "CapWiz" website to easily send an email to each of your legislators - <http://capwiz.com/npta2/wa/home/>, b) Phone the Legislative Hotline (800-562-6000).

To Contact the Chairs on Day of FD: See cell phone #s below. You may also contact the WSPTA office in Tacoma at 253-565-2153 or 1-800-562-3804.

Please do contact us with any questions – looking forward to meeting you, and joining together to make a legislative difference -- **thank you!**

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More info is available on the WSPTA website - www.wastatepta.org/leg/session_09.htm or FWS http://www.fundingwaschools.org/index_files/Focus_Day_2009_WSPTA_Funding_WA_K12_Schools.htm.