



# Voicing Your Support: How to be an Effective Advocate for Your Library

Topics covered by Paul Nelson

- Wisconsin Library Association (WLA) legislation & advocacy webpages
- Library Development & Legislation Committee
- WLA state legislation agenda & policy statement
- Legislative status report
- Action e-list
- Advocacy resources
- Wisconsin state budget process
- Creating a common agenda

<http://www.wla.lib.wi.us/legis/index.htm>

## Legislation & Advocacy

Become a library advocate! This is where you start.

Learn about library-related legislative issues and help Wisconsin's libraries serve the state even better!

WLA's legislative agenda is set annually by the WLA Board of Directors based upon recommendations from the Library Development and Legislation Committee (LD&L). WLA works closely with the Wisconsin Educational Media & Technology Association on issues concerning school libraries. We also support the work of the American Library Association by appointing a Federal Legislative Advocate to monitor and communicate about those issues.

If you have any questions or concerns about the WLA's legislative program, please contact [Lisa Strand](#), WLA Executive Director.

*SUPPORT*  
**Wisconsin Libraries**  
*Keep Us All In A Better State*



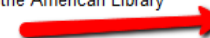
### Action Alerts

- [Sign up for future legislative alerts](#)



### Agenda and issues

- [Building a Common Agenda](#)
- [State issues](#) - WLA Agenda
- [Federal issues](#)



### Advocacy Resources



### LD&L Committee



### Library Alliance



### Library Legislative Day

Write your LEGISLATORS

GO!

Enter your ZIP code and contact your representatives



## Library Development & Legislation Committee

The primary purpose of the Library Development & Legislation Committee is to make recommendations to the WLA Board and Association relative to WLA policies and programs for statewide library development and legislation.

### 2012 Committee Members:

#### **Terry Dawson, Chair**

Karen Busch  
Joshua Cowles  
Allison Kaplan  
Paul Nelson  
Rhonda Puntney  
Krista Ross  
Kathy Sanders  
Julie Schneider  
Shannon Schultz  
Brian Simons  
Lynn Stainbrook  
Kathryn Tvaruzka  
Kristine Adams Wendt

#### Ex-officio:

Anthony Driessen, WLA Lobbyist, Dewitt, Ross, & Stevens  
Lisa Strand, WLA Executive Director

#### Meeting Dates:

All meetings are held on Fridays (unless otherwise noted) at the WLA office, 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

February 3  
April 13  
June 1  
August 3  
October 5  
Wednesday, December 5

[Library Legislative Information](#)

[Library Legislative Day](#)

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## WLA State Legislative Agenda For the 2009-11 Biennium

The Wisconsin Library Association (WLA), established in 1891, unites and supports people from all types of libraries to develop and advocate for dynamic, responsive Wisconsin libraries. Our 2,000 members, including librarians, libraries, library trustees, and friends from across the state, share this common purpose.

### Legislative Priorities

- Increase state funding for [public library system aids](#) to 13% of local library expenditures, as specified in Wisconsin statutes.
- Support expanded funding for [BadgerLink](#) resources.
- Preserve the use of the [Universal Service Fund](#) for BadgerLink and other library services.
- Increase funding necessary to support traditional service levels for [state contracts](#):
  - **Wisconsin Talking Book and Braille Library**
  - **Cooperative Children's Book Center**
  - **Wisconsin Library Services (WiLS) and**
  - **Milwaukee Public Library/Interlibrary Loan**
- Support funding for [statewide delivery](#) of library materials.
- Support increased funding of the **University of Wisconsin System libraries**.
- Support funding for the [UW Research Commons Initiative](#).
- Support the statutory use of the [Common School Fund](#).
- Support the need for libraries to have access to [sufficient bandwidth](#).
- Support [public library district](#) enabling legislation.
- Support the [Wisconsin State Law Library](#) and the **Milwaukee County and Dane County Legal Resource libraries**.
- Oppose any proposals that mandate a specific percentage of funding for educational institutions be spent on classroom instruction.
- Support access to **government publications/documents**.
- Support full funding for the **Wisconsin Historical Society Library**.
- Support updated standards for school library media centers.
- Support the employment of at least one full-time certified school library media specialist and appropriate support staff in every school; support additional professional staff and support staff in schools of 650 students or more.
- Support the employment of at least one full-time instructional technology professional and appropriate support staff in every school; support additional professional staff and support staff in schools of 650 students or more.
- Continue to promote the importance of [publicly-funded free and open access](#) to library materials to all Wisconsin citizens.
- Support continuation of [maintenance of effort](#) funding levels by local units of government as a requirement for public library system membership.

## Legislative Policy Statements

### **The Wisconsin Library Association affirms:**

- That library services address essential informational, educational, cultural, and recreational needs for Wisconsin residents and merit strong legislative support.
- That the state's libraries, by providing lifelong learning opportunities, make a significant contribution to the quality of life for all Wisconsin residents.
- That the state's libraries through a statewide knowledge network provide essential information resources for the state's economic development.
- That the state's libraries, through multiple cooperative arrangements, serve as models for regional and statewide cooperation.
- That the state's librarians provide Wisconsin residents with the essential information services they need to succeed at school, at work, and in their personal lives.

### **The Wisconsin Library Association supports state legislative policy that:**

- Ensures that all the people of Wisconsin have the broadest possible access to information resources and materials.
- Preserves the fundamental principle of publicly funded free and open access to library materials and services.
- Ensures privacy in the use of library materials and services.
- Strongly supports the development of collections and resources for libraries of all types.
- Broadens the availability of communications technology for educational and information resources.
- Promotes regional and statewide sharing of library and information resources.
- Supports strong statewide leadership for library development and cooperation.

### **The Wisconsin Library Association opposes state legislative policy that:**

- Restricts access by the state's residents to information resources and materials.
- Affects local and state taxing options that could have an adverse affect on libraries.
- Intrudes on the privacy of library users.
- Interferes with the right of local public library boards to independently determine local library policy, staffing, and services based on community standards.

## [Current Status Report on Legislative Priorities](#)



# Legislative Status Report: 2011-13 Biennium

For more background on the state budget and state budget repair bills, including the actual bills, please see this [research guide](#) created by Beth Harper, librarian at UW-Madison.

1 Issue (links to WLA position paper)	2 WLA Position and Background in Brief	3 Summary of activity	4 Latest/What's Next
<a href="#">Support the UW Research Commons</a>	<p>WLA supports funding of \$6 million for digital library collections that support research and advanced study across the UW System. Wisconsin must build its information infrastructure for innovation and economic growth and be able to compete with other top public universities.</p> <p>The WLA Board has endorsed the Council of UW Libraries resolution on library resource sharing and WiscNet continuation.</p>	<p>The UW Regents submitted a budget to DOA including \$6 million for the Research Commons. This was not part of Governor Walker's budget proposal. Cuts of \$250 million will be shared equally by UW-Madison and the UW System.</p> <p>An amendment inserted by Joint Finance to cripple WiscNet and prevent the UW from accepting a federal broadband grant was amended in the Assembly to allow the grant project to continue and WiscNet to continue for 2 years, with conditions. See more details on the <a href="#">WiscNet blog</a>.</p>	<p>Budget awaiting Governor Walker's signature.</p> <p>Thank legislators for approving changes to Joint Finance amendments that allow WiscNet/UW broadband grant to continue.</p>

## More Information

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## Legislation & Advocacy

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### Action E-List & District Dispatch notifications

Please enter your contact information to sign up for our mailing list.

(\* indicates required field)

#### Basic Information

Prefix

First\*  Last\*

Email\*

Phone  Fax

Address\*

Street Two

City\*

State\*

ZIP\*

ZIP + 4

**Remember Me** ([what's this?](#))



## Advocacy Resources

Learn how to be a better advocate and share these resources with others.

- [Campaign for Wisconsin Libraries](#)
- [CapWiz](#): Create an advocacy message, connect with officials, federal issues
- [Contact information for state legislators elected in November 2010](#) (Excel)
- [Alliance for Libraries Fund](#)
- [Hosting a Library Listening Session](#)
- [Links to Other Advocacy Sites](#)
- State Budget Process
  - [State Budget Process Timeline](#) (Word document)
  - [State Budget - How the Budget Gets Passed](#) ( Word)
  - [State Budget - Timeline Flow Chart](#) (PDF) - with thanks to Michael Blumenfeld, WEMTA lobbyist
- [Tips for Library Advocates](#)
- [Ten Easy Campaign Activities](#)

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Last updated: November 10, 2010

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# Tips for Library Advocates

[General Tips for Working with Legislators](#)

[Writing to Legislators](#)

[Meeting with Legislators](#)

[Telephoning Legislators](#)

## It's Up to You: Advocating for Libraries

In order to become an even stronger voice for Wisconsin libraries, WLA needs the help of many more members. **We need your help.**

**Don't worry if you don't have much political experience.** Elected officials want and need to hear from their constituents. Besides, some of the most effective things you can do are the simplest ones. **Vote--**in both primaries and general elections. Legislators know who votes, and they pay more attention to people who vote than to those who don't.

**Keep abreast of legislative issues which affect libraries** by reading your mailings from ALA and WLA. Participate with your library colleagues in the WLA's Library Legislative Day (usually held each February). Attend the ALA's Legislative Day. Events like these are a great way to meet your legislators, and you'll have the support of your library colleagues while you do it.

**Keep in touch with your elected officials.** Write a letter to your legislator indicating your support for the WLA's Legislative Agenda. Cover only one or two issues in each letter, and use your own words. Call or visit your legislator to discuss your concerns about library issues as they arise. Remember that the personal touch is important; use e-mail only if something is urgent, and, if possible, address your e-mail message to the staff person in charge of that particular issue. The next step is to get involved in a campaign, either by giving time or money--or both!

Another option is to invite your public official or legislator to visit your library, particularly when there is some special event going on. They can see how busy you are, and by introducing them to folks present or even arranging for them to say a few words, you can help them score points with their constituents.

### More Advocacy Tips

There are many [advocacy ideas](#) available to library supporters. Please let us know what you can do. Libraries are a unique and powerful part of a successful democracy, and so is your individual participation in the democratic process. Get involved today!



## Writing to Legislators

Even in this age of electronic communication, writing a personal letter is still one of the most effective ways to reach an elected official. Taking the time to write about an issue shows you care deeply about it.

1. Send your letter in time to affect your legislator's decision.
2. Make sure your letter is easy to read.
3. Use your own words to get your message across. Don't copy a form letter, or even parts of one. If you make the letter entirely your own, your thoughts and convictions will show your sincerity and concern. Remember, you are the expert on libraries. Share your experiences.
4. Sign your full name and address so the legislator or other government official can reply to you.
5. Make your position clear. Say exactly what it is you wish the government official to do. If possible, refer to the issue you're writing about by its official title (such as "Senate Bill 259"). It is best to write about only one proposed law (bill) or issue in each letter.
6. Give your own personal experience to support your request. Tell briefly how the issue will affect you, your family, your library, or your community.
7. Ask the official to state his/her position on the issue in a reply to you.
8. Address the government official correctly:

The Honorable (name of official)  
State Senator (or, State Representative)  
(or, Governor of Wisconsin)  
State Capitol  
Address  
Madison, WI Zip Code

# Meeting with Legislators

Legislation can only reflect what the people want if you and others take the time and trouble to inform legislators about what you want. Surprisingly, few people contact their elected officials. It may be difficult to realize that a single visit in person, a phone call or letter can make an impact on a legislator's views toward a piece of legislation but it certainly can and does. Remember, YOU are the library expert and you have valuable information and perspectives to impart.

1. Make an APPOINTMENT. Legislators and their staff members are busy, so extend them the courtesy of calling in advance.
2. THINK about what you want to say before you arrive. Review specific bills and background information on key issues provided by WLA or other sources.
3. SUMMARIZE your concerns in a concise manner. State your position clearly. Remember to be positive, enthusiastic, considerate and appreciative. Be someone your legislators or their staff would enjoy meeting with again!
4. SHARE THE COMMUNITY CONTEXT OF YOUR MESSAGE. Use personal stories about your library and its patrons in order to make your case. SUPPORT your position:

\* We serve X number of individuals (constituents) each week. They use education, information and reading services such as \_\_\_\_\_.

\* We are doing our best to give citizens of our community (your district) the best possible bang for the library buck!

\* Utilization of our library, including the growing demand for electronic/computer access, has increased by X percent over the past X number of years. In addition, the cost of materials (books and other publications) has increased.

5. TELL your legislator what you hope he/she will do. Tell what WLA's top priorities are.

6. LISTEN to your legislator's concerns and opinions. He or she may not always agree with you, and it's important to understand the message the legislator/staff is trying to convey. Your legislator is balancing many constituents' concerns and may not always be able to vote as you hope.

7. INFORM your legislator of opposing viewpoints he/she may encounter and any counter arguments you may have. Don't try to hide information.

8. BROADEN YOUR SCOPE OF LEGISLATIVE INTEREST. Consider asking open-ended questions to show your interest in the legislative process and to learn about other issues of concern:

- \* Are you aware of any other library-related issues that have come to your attention, of which I may not be aware?

- \* How do you see the legislative session unfolding? What are the main priorities of the legislature overall this session?

- \* Going beyond library issues, what are the priority issues of the district as you hear from constituents?

- \* Would you have any additional advice for us today on the subjects we have brought up?

9. THANK the legislator for his/her time and interest. Tell him/her that you appreciate the efforts on your behalf. Invite the legislator to visit your library or meet with the board of trustees back in the district as your schedule may permit.

10. OFFER your expertise or assistance in the future.

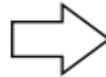
11. FOLLOW-UP the visit with a call, letter or card. Make note of any additional information or your answers to questions the legislator may have asked. Keep in touch in order to build on the good will you've established by meeting with the legislator.

# Wisconsin State Budget Process



**EXECUTIVE**

State agencies submit budget requests to the Governor in September of even numbered year.



Governor creates budget and delivers budget message to the Legislature on or before last Tuesday in January.



**JOINT LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE**

Joint Finance Committee submits modified version of the budget bill to house it was introduced in.



Joint Finance Committee meets in "executive session" to amend and pass the budget bill out of committee (April- June).



Joint Finance Committee holds public hearings statewide through March and April.



Governor's budget is introduced in either the Senate or Assembly and sent to the Joint Finance Committee (8 Senate members and 8 Assembly members).

**LEGISLATURE**

Budget passed by first house, after more amendments. Sent on to second house.



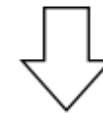
Second house makes modifications and passes its version of the



Conference Committee (leadership from Senate and Assembly) holds public meetings and resolves differences between two houses' versions of the budget. Committee submits unamendable version to the Legislature.



Once budget is passed by majority of both Senate and Assembly members, it is sent to the Governor for approval by June 30 (statutory requirement).



**EXECUTIVE**



The budget is approved by the legislature, signed by the Governor, and becomes law for the next two years.



OR

Governor signs budget as is, vetoes budget, or partially vetoes (specific parts he disagrees with).



The budget approved by the legislature becomes law for the next two years.

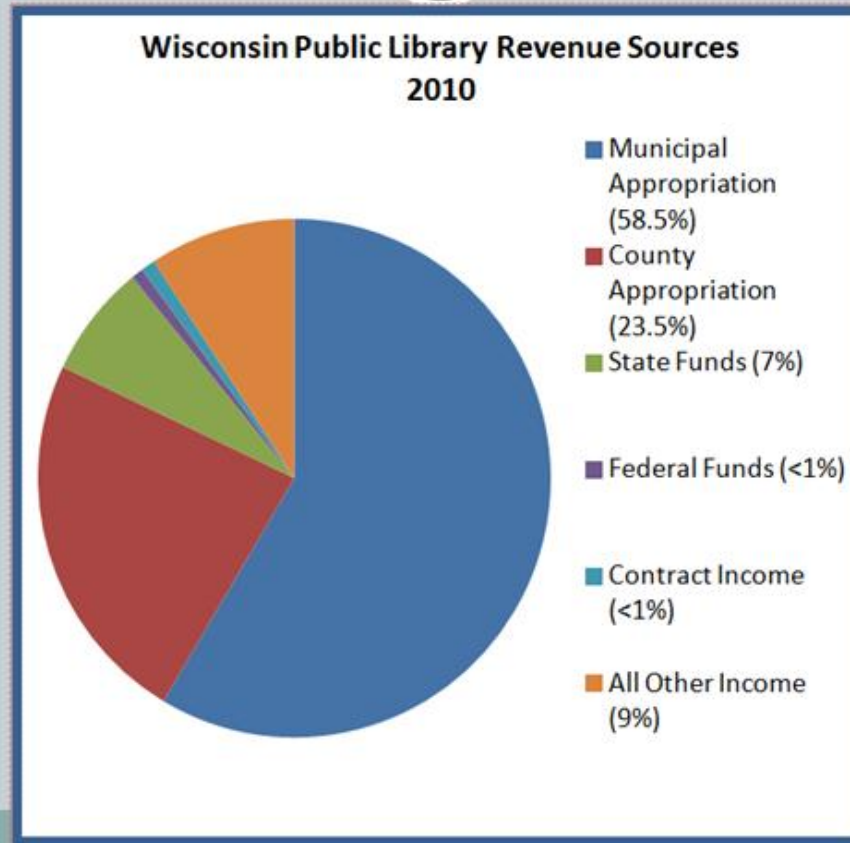


The legislature can override the Governor's veto with a 2/3 majority in both houses.

# Building a Common Agenda (Ensuring a place at the table)

## Sources of revenue: Wisconsin 2010

Source: Wisconsin Public Library Service Data 2010



# Building a Common Agenda

## Local Officials

### What to do & talk about

- Call each person and set up an individual appointment.
- Provide a tour of the library
- Share your philosophy of service
- What you hope to accomplish (working with the board and staff) as Director, i.e. shared vision.
- Ask about their reason(s) for serving (in their respective capacities).
  - *People do things for their own reasons, not yours.*
- Their sense of the community's priorities
  - (Middleton 1986: Where is new library on list?)
  - *People pay attention to the things they love and value.*

## Building a Common Agenda

### Questions to ask candidates for office / local & county officials

- ***What made you decide to run for office?*** (The answer may allow you to learn if a particular official has a big-picture view or a narrow-interest agenda.)
- ***What are the most important issues facing our county/city/village over the next few years?***
- (And if a statement about libraries hasn't been offered unprompted.) ***Where do you place libraries on your list of priorities?***