



# *Days in the District*

A Florida Library Association  
Education and Advocacy  
Initiative

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## Days in the District – Why do it?

### **The Evolving Role of Libraries in Advancing Community Goals**

Libraries are a good investment and an important part of every healthy and vibrant community. Funding provided to Florida libraries delivered a return of more than 10 dollars on every dollar spent (FDOS, 2013). Patrons are happy with Florida libraries. When asked, 78% of all U.S. adults say that libraries help them find reliable information, learn new things, and get information to help make sound decisions (Pew, Libraries 2016). However, as libraries and their staffs have been asked to do more and more, funding for libraries has been declining. ***It is important that elected officials at all levels of government know what libraries contribute to communities and are aware of the value they provide.***

### **The Need for Year-Round Outreach and Education to Raise the Visibility of Libraries**

Everyone loves libraries but only a few people could name even half of all the services a public library provides to the community. Even an elected official with a special place in their heart for their local library will be a better budgeting decision maker if they have toured the library and participated in some events. There are lots of competing priorities, the more elected officials know about the value of their library creates in the community the safer the library will be from challenges to funding.

The Florida Library Association provides advocacy strategies through its *Days in the District* initiative. Its purpose is to raise awareness with legislators, and other elected officials, of the valuable services libraries contribute to every Florida community. While many elected officials truly have a warm place in their heart for libraries, they are likely aware of only a very small portion of what you and your staff do every day.

While it is important to communicate with your State Senator or Representative during Session, it is even more important to build a strong relationship with them while they are at home in their districts. That is the time when they can hear from constituents how their decisions about funding, work load, and other issues impact libraries and their patrons.

### **The Tools for the Job**

#### **Professional lobbyist for FLA issues**

One of the most important member benefits FLA provides is supporting a paid professional lobbyist to provide statewide advocacy with the Florida Legislature. The FLA Legislative Platform for the 2019 Session will be available on the FLA website soon.

#### **Communicating with Elected Officials through *Engage*,**

*Engage* is an online messaging system offered by ALA to present advocacy messages to elected officials.

#### **How to email your Legislators in *Engage***

1. Visit [www.flalib.org](http://www.flalib.org) and click on the link "[click here to ENGAGE with your elected officials.](#)"
2. Click on the "Email your Legislators" button in the middle of the screen.
3. Enter your zip code into the box and click "check zip code." This automatically finds your legislators
4. Enter your name in the box next to the closing. This feature automatically fills in your name on the letter.
5. Enter your contact information below and click "Submit."

## Now is the time: Invite Elected Officials to Visit Your Library

Invite legislators and local elected officials to your library for a brief tour and to participate in activities and events that are already on your library schedule.

Here are some tips to consider when extending an invitation to your legislators:

- Give 4 - 6 weeks advance notice.
- Keep it simple: invite them to something you're already doing, such as a summer reading celebration or back to school open house. **Think about what event would make a good photo op for a Legislator.**
- Make sure your invitation includes important details as well as information that will encourage them to visit.
- Key information to include:
  1. Date/time (consider offering multiple dates/times in order to increase your chances that the Legislator will be available)
  2. Location
  3. Description of the event
  4. Estimated size of attendance at the event
  5. The type of audience they'll be interacting with (teens? parents? educators?)
  6. What the Legislator's role will be, including whether or not they will be expected to speak
  7. Some key information about your library that illustrates the reach you have into the community, such as how many patrons it serves, the total number of community members who attended a library event in the past year, the number of reference questions answered in a given year, etc.
- Give elected officials an incentive to come:
  1. Let the elected official know if there will be a chance for him or her to meet with voters.
  2. State what media outlets you plan on inviting, such as the local TV station or newspaper.
  3. Create a role for the Legislator, such as the judge of a bookmark contest, or the person who gets to distribute awards to summer reading contest winners.
  4. If the elected official has been supportive of libraries in the past, you may want to honor him or her at the event with a plaque or some other form of recognition.
  5. Let them know a photographer will be there.
- Consider having multiple people send the same invitation, especially if they are local VIPs or if they have a connection to the elected official.
- After the invitation is sent, **follow up in one week with a phone call** if you have not received a response, or have a VIP take on this task.
- Find out if they have a library card, and if not, give them one at the event.
- Don't be discouraged if the official's staff declines the invitation. Just remember to invite them to the

next event you have, and in the meantime be sure to keep them informed about the library by adding them to your newsletter mailing list, sending them a library card, and keeping their staff up to date on library news and accomplishments by sending articles and photos.

## Sample Agendas

### **SAMPLE LIBRARY VISIT PLAN (Facility Tour) 1.5 hour visit**

10:00am - 10:15am Elected Official/Staff at front office  
10:15am – 10:45am Library tour (including stacks, reading, computer, conference rooms, etc. Consider some behind-the-scenes spaces as well, such as circulation workroom  
10:45am – 11:15am Meeting in conference room with employees, informal remarks and Q&A/snacks  
11:15am – 11:30am Wrap-up / final questions and comments from elected official

### **SAMPLE LIBRARY VISIT PLAN (Board / Supporters Meeting) 1.5 hour visit**

10:00am - 10:15am Greet Elected Official/Staff at front office  
10:15am – 11:15am Meeting in conference room with trustees and/or local friends groups. Develop an agenda that allows them to highlight the value of library in the community.  
11:15am – 11:30am Wrap-up / final questions and comments

### **SAMPLE LIBRARY VISIT PLAN (Program Tour) 1.5 hour visit**

10:00am – 10:15am Greet Elected Official/Staff at front office  
10:15am – 10:45am Allow Elected Official/Staff to join a scheduled program such as reading to the blind, a summer reading program or a personal development, training or health program being held at your library. 10:45am – 11:00am Q&A from program participants  
11:00am – 11:30am Brief tour of remaining library facilities and discussion with library staff

## Days in the District Ideas

**Focus on and discuss what is most important to your legislators.**

Workforce Development  
Sm. Bus. Dev. Resources  
Job Skills  
Job Searching  
Adult Literacy  
GED Classes  
ESL Skill Development  
Veterans Services  
Free WiFi  
Digital Literacy  
IT Learning Labs  
Health Literacy/Resources

Wellness Campaigns  
Financial Literacy  
Government Documents  
Free reading materials  
Scholarly press materials  
Exhibit space for local talent  
Partnerships with community cultural groups  
Showcase local authors  
Meeting spaces for groups  
Discovery space: maker space  
Parenting Classes

Early Literacy  
Story times  
Supplementing School Libraries  
Summer Reading  
After School Tutoring  
Safe haven for teens  
Community-wide programs (e.g. One City/One book)  
Book Clubs  
Source of civic pride  
Trusted community convener  
Equity of access

## Visit Lawmakers in their District Office

### Schedule a Visit to the District Office

Organize a group of library supporters to attend a meeting in your legislator's district office. Here are some specific tips for scheduling your appointment:

#### Make an Appointment

- Try to schedule a meeting with your legislator between July and September
- Have one person serve as the "meeting contact/coordinator." This person should contact the legislator's district office scheduler directly to make the appointment. (If you don't know how to reach your legislator's district office, click on the tool on the [FLA Engage website](#).)
- The scheduler in the legislative office may ask who will be in attendance. Offer to email the scheduler that information.
- Confirm your meeting time the day before the scheduled appointment.

#### Be Prepared

- Know the issues and highlight key points; use FLA Advocacy talking points and tools!
- Anticipate likely questions or responses.
- Have a consistent message.
- Determine who will lead off the discussion for your group and who will raise particular points, issues, etc. Practice makes perfect!

#### Be On Time

- It is important to be prompt, however, be no more than 10 minutes early
- Don't forget to include a few extra minutes to **getting through security**

#### Stay Focused and be Concise

- Pick the top 3 issues concerning your library to discuss and stick to them. The most important issue should be mentioned first.
- Deliver a well-conceived message.
- The meeting will last about 15-20 minutes so it is important to make your point and then move on to the next topic.

#### Be Positive

- Look for common ground and keep politics out of it.
- Highlight the many resources and benefits your library provides to the community.
- Thank him/her for previous support, if applicable.
- If you don't know the answer to a question, say so and follow up with the correct answer.

#### Make a Connection with Staff Members

- It is important to build a relationship with the legislator's staff members. They can be a great resource and ally when it comes to influencing an elected official.

### Leave Behind Materials

- Don't hesitate to leave printed brochures, flyers or information sheets for the legislator to use for reference. Include compelling statistics, reiterating the importance of libraries in your community.

### Turn to Social Media to Enhance your Voice

- Take pictures with your legislator and post them on your social media accounts. Spread the word and publicize your meeting.
- Interact with the elected official through your social media accounts to strengthen your message. A Thank You Letter is a Must

### Follow-Up

- Within two weeks of your visit, following up with a letter to the legislator and staff thanking them for their time. Include a brief summary of the issues you discussed and any understandings that might have been reached.
- Send this letter by email to the correct staff member and make it a point to stay connected with him/her throughout the year.

## Contacting Legislators

### How do I contact legislators' offices?

**Phone calls** are best for urgent matters (a vote or decision is imminent); but they are also welcome at any time. Talking with a staff member is fine; they do a lot of legwork for legislative offices. It is important to work around the legislative calendar.

- When you call, ask for the staff person who is working on your particular issue (e.g., appropriations, education, telecommunications, etc.). You will be transferred over to the appropriate staffer.
- Introduce yourself: your name; you are a library supporter and/or are affiliated with [library or institution name]; and state that you are a constituent.
- Briefly, tell the staffer your issue. If you have a bill number or specific citation, use it. The staff tracks many issues! In a few sentences, explain why your issue is important.
- Tell the staffer what specific action you would like your elected official to take. For example, "I urge the Senator to vote to allocate an additional \$x million for [program], etc. Be specific in what you are requesting.
- The staffer might ask you a couple of questions. If you don't know the answer, tell them you'll research the issue and get back to them. This is ok! But, be sure to follow through when this occurs.
- Be sure to thank them *and* your elected official for their support of libraries. Offer to be a resource should they have any questions.
- Frame and send photos you took of the Legislator to him/her with your library patrons.
- Evaluate the event: What went well? What could have gone better?
- Write a post for the library's blog or an article for the newsletter summing up the event. When it's published, send it to the Legislator's local office.

**E-mails and letters** should include the same information as above. Be sure to sign your full name and street address so it is obvious that you are a constituent.

### Social Media Tips

1. Follow your legislator on their social media platform.
2. 'Like' their messages.
3. Retweet or share their messages.
4. Learn what times they send messages – be ready to respond at that time. They look for responses!
5. Begin to send them messages, tag them in your messages and note if they like/share your messages.
6. Use visuals – these messages are 50% more likely to be viewed and shared.
7. Don't forget to send them print letters as well – note your social media presence.



## Media Tips

Before inviting the press, discuss press coverage with the press aide of the Congressperson. They will want to know the press is being invited as well as the parameters of the coverage. Make absolutely sure you do not put the Congressperson in a situation in which press coverage may make them uncomfortable.

- Direct a letter or phone call of invitation to the news editor, or some other member of the press with whom you have a relationship.
- Invite members of the press well in advance. News crews are often in short supply and need to be scheduled as far in advance as possible. The invitation should contain the following information:
  - Who will be visiting the library
  - When the visit will take place
  - Location of the library
  - Background information on the library
  - Reason for the visit/event
  - Those portions of the visit open to press coverage

### Tips on Maximizing Media Coverage

- Plan your visit with an eye toward accommodating the press, particularly television and radio, where pictures and sound are essential and sometimes more difficult to accommodate. For example, if the Congressperson addresses library patrons, make sure that there is space close to the podium for cameras and microphones. If the Congressperson is scheduled to engage in a library activity, make sure room is provided for the cameraperson to obtain good footage.
- Provide the press an opportunity to interview the Congressperson at the conclusion of the visit. Introduce this portion of the visit by telling the press why the invitation was extended and what public policy issues are important to you. If you do not attempt to steer the interview toward your issues and your library, the press may engage the member in issues unrelated to the visit.
- Make sure you know the names of reporters and news organizations, so you can follow up.
- Provide plenty of opportunities for pictures and sound with the library patrons. Good photo opportunities will yield the best media coverage, young people are always a popular subject for photos. (With all photos, be sure you have signed releases from the parents.)
- Whenever possible, relate library activities to your key messages, i.e., “This activity helps our teen library patrons prepare for careers because...” so both the press and the member understand the values on which the library program is based.
- Underscore the need for help with key public policy issues during the library event.
- Share your event with other libraries and the FLA office!

## Stories of Success

**A meeting with Robin Shader and Rep. Trumbull's Chief Legislative Assistant, Patti Butchikas:** Robin shared the following: Patti said she knows we visit during session at the Capital, and said it's better to do it when not in session. There are so many people who want to meet at the Capital, and (for the rep) it's just one fast meeting after another. She recommended attending the legislative delegation meetings and getting on the agenda. She said the legislators have a list of speakers, and a notebook so they can take notes of comments during the presentations. Patti says that Rep. Trumbull does take lots of notes.

From Robin Shader:

"The group I took today included Khelsea (who is also on the Advocacy and Legislative Committee) and three members of the Library Foundation. One is a long-time member of the School Board, and another is a personal friend of Rep Trumbull. The third is a lawyer who used to have an office in the same building. So there was some familiarity. It was a nice meeting.

I shared information provided by the state library regarding how libraries assist in disaster recovery. Rep Trumbull is on the new committee exploring how the state can do a better job with preparation and recovery. I also included some newspaper articles.

Patti seemed to like the postcards with comments from library users. Not sure how impactful those will be, but they can't hurt.

We are planning to have a Foundation member get on the agenda and speak at the legislative delegation meeting. Library staff are not able to do this, since the county will have a representative talking about the county's legislative priorities. Our delegation includes Rep. Jay Trumbull, Rep. Brad Drake, and Senator George Gainer. Senator Gainer's office is helping us schedule a meeting during the Days in the District week."

## Resources for Libraries in Advocacy

### Planning your Legislative Outreach (From ALA)

As with most things, timing is everything. To be effective, you must familiarize yourself with the various stages of the legislative process, which can be lengthy.

#### Six to Eight Months before Sessions:

- Meet in your district.
- Compile pertinent local data.
- Offer model language/concise legislation.
- Train advocates.
- Invite potential supporters to the library.
- Identify allies and collaborators.

#### When the Session or Budget Cycle Begins:

- Look for the library provisions in proposed legislation.
- Lobby to amend or delete unacceptable language and concepts.
- Visit legislative offices when you need to provide information or educate.
- Monitor library legislation and keep advocates informed.
- Know when appropriate committees are meeting and time advocate visits and media outreach, (for example, op-eds, editorial board meetings, letters to the editor) accordingly.
- The president generally submits his proposed federal budget to Congress in early February.
- Watch ALAWON for updates and action needed.

#### Throughout the Session:

- Indicate your preferences on legislation of concern.
- Learn from your mistakes and adjust your strategy.
- Ask for feedback.

#### After the Session Ends:

- Attend fundraisers.
- Thank the legislators who have met or communicated with you.
- Invite lawmakers to visit the library.
- Give recognition awards and gear up for re-election time.

#### Before Re-election Time:

- Identify legislators and policymakers who supported you.
- Invite candidates to the library to meet staff, users and advocates.
- Organize and publicize the library agenda.
- Encourage candidates to include libraries in their "platform."
- Cultivate strategic relationships with policymakers and constituents.

## Shaping Your Message

Library advocates must be able to articulate issues in a way that transcends partisan politics, acknowledges economic realities, and positions libraries as part of the solution to larger problems. Both old friends in City/County Commissions Council/State Legislature/Congress and new members must be helped to understand the role of libraries and librarians in the Electronic Age.

### They must also understand:

- The importance of federal and state leadership in library funding.
- The significance of libraries when dealing with intellectual property, confidentiality, freedom of information and other policy issues.
- The relative modest investment of tax dollars that result in huge benefits.

### Key points:

- Libraries are central to a literate society.
- Libraries help prepare Americans of all ages to compete in a global economy.
- Libraries are "wired." They make information technology available to all.
- Public libraries are community assets. They are resource centers for education, employment and recreation.
- Libraries are part of the American dream. They are a place for education and self-help.
- Libraries bring opportunity to all—including poor, minority, immigrant and rural populations.
- School libraries play a crucial role in preparing youth to be literate, productive citizens.
- Academic libraries are critical to advancing knowledge.

### Who Can be Most Effective?

Selecting the best person to deliver your message can make the difference as to whether you are successful. Smart legislative advocates know which legislators are most influential on any given issue. They also know the names of those who are in a position to influence the legislator.

**The most important person to any elected official is a voting constituent.**

Other important people are:

- Campaign donors
- Local civic and business leaders
- Editors of local media who shape editorial opinions and news coverage
- Potential candidates who may oppose lawmakers in future elections
- Individuals who have had a positive impact on his or her life

## 101 FREE THINGS TO DO AT THE LIBRARY

1. Find a best seller to check out
2. Use the WiFi or a public computer
3. Catch up on current events by browsing magazines
4. Introduce your grandchild to the Library
5. Pick up the tax return forms you need
6. Search the 1.5 million items in the online catalog
7. Learn a new language using Mango languages online
8. Have items delivered to you if you're homebound
9. Renew items online, by phone, or in person
10. Use reliable, kid-friendly resources to do homework
11. Text a question and get an answer in minutes
12. Check out the latest DVD
13. Volunteer to help at the Summer Reading Carnival
14. Learn about (your town's) history
15. Participate in the One Book One Community program
16. Buy See's Candy bars as a fundraiser for the Library
17. Get help from the ultimate search engine – a librarian
18. Download ebooks and audiobooks from anywhere
19. Make photocopies – in color or black and white
20. Borrow a Cultural Pass to visit a local museum for free
21. Borrow a Kill-A-Watt monitor and save on electric bills
22. Bring the family to a puppet show, movie, or magic act
23. Take a GED, ASVAB, SAT or civil service practice test
24. Look up how much that Roy Rogers lunch box is worth
25. Attend an interesting lecture by a local historian
26. Join the Friends of (Your) Public Library
27. Bring your preschooler to Storytime and meet other parents
28. Read every issue of The Beacon that has been written
29. Check your investments
30. Learn Word and Excel – easy, intermediate, and advanced
31. Research genealogy and trace your family tree
32. Find mysteries, science fiction, romances, and westerns
33. Get help to find a job or change your career
34. Borrow a potty training kit to share with your child
35. Pick up recommended reading lists for kids of all ages
36. Read the newest Popular Mechanics magazine
37. Create a resume and apply for jobs online
38. Learn about upcoming community and cultural events
39. Shape up with an exercise video
40. Find a list of local childcare providers
41. Read the latest medical research reports online
42. Learn to identify the birds in your backyard
43. Study in a (relatively) quiet place
44. Watch the electronic reader board for Library & local events
45. Use Library resources to start a small business
46. Find out about local community organizations
47. Consult consumer guides on buying decisions
48. Get specs, diagrams, and manuals for 34,000 vehicles
49. Receive reading recommendations via RSS/email
50. Update your Facebook page
51. Check out books in large print for easier reading
52. Join other knitters and crafters at the monthly Craft Nights
53. Check out your favorite graphic novel
54. Learn how to navigate the Internet
55. Visit us some evenings and weekends
56. Be inspired by new ideas for redecorating your house
57. Learn how to prepare your preschooler for success in school
58. Check out a new or old television series
59. Get picture books for storytelling at home
60. Pick up catalogs of classes at local colleges
61. Join a book discussion group
62. Trek to another planet in a Sci-Fi novel
63. Research a term paper
64. Schedule a Library tour tailored to your group or class
65. Open an email account
66. Bring your family to watch a free movie
67. Volunteer to re-shelve books
68. Play with a puppet or color with crayons
69. Learn to touch type or master that new software program
70. Find a new recipe
71. Share online resources and databases with your students
72. Enroll your child in the Summer Reading Program
73. Take an introductory computer class
74. Check out the latest fashion magazine
75. Explore your background with Heritage Quest or Ancestry
76. Curl up to read in a comfy chair
77. Cool off in air-conditioned comfort on a hot summer day
78. Be warm in the winter months
79. Read a local newspaper
80. Buy a raffle ticket to win a beautiful quilt
81. Publicize a nonprofit organization on the bulletin board
82. Find out about upcoming community and cultural events
83. Learn how to preserve vegetables from your garden
84. Look up the phone number for a long lost friend
85. Participate in Adult Summer Reading and enter to win prizes
86. Learn how to take care of your new pet
87. Donate your used books to the Friends of the Library
88. Reserve (hold) books that will help you plan a vacation
89. Check out language CDs and phrasebooks for that trip abroad
90. Keep kids entertained with audio books during car trips
91. Be notified by email when items you've requested arrive
92. Wiggle and giggle with your child at Storytime
93. Stay in touch with family far away through email
94. Learn what is going on in the community
95. "Like" us on Facebook
96. Check out our website at [www.nplibrary.org](http://www.nplibrary.org)
97. Read minutes from past City Council Meetings
98. Come see our artwork on display
99. Order materials from other libraries and pick them up locally — right here in (Your Town)
100. Drop off materials for other Washington County libraries at the Public Library
101. Come hear an author speak about his or her latest book

2016-2017



# FEDERAL FUNDS IN FLORIDA



In 2016-17, Florida received \$8,259,897 for libraries. Those funds were put to use in a variety of ways.



## FLORIDA MEMORY STATE ARCHIVES



546,142 historical pictures, audio, film, and video

98 million views      31.7 million downloads

## FLORIDA ELECTRONIC LIBRARY

**FREE** electronic information anywhere with Internet access

12.7 million sessions      24.4 million searches

## FLORIDA LIBRARY LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Builds library staff leadership skills to better serve Floridians



## FLORIDA LIBRARY YOUTH PROGRAM

Provides services to youth services librarians to promote services for children, families, tweens, and teens in public libraries



1.4 million youths participated in 45,725 programs

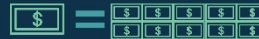
## FLORIDA LIBRARY WEBINARS

web based training for library staff



Library staff watched 1,153 videos 28,675 times

## RETURN ON INVESTMENT



\$1 spent      \$10.18 return on investment

## E-GOVERNMENT & WORKFORCE RECOVERY

Helps librarians provide the public with the technology, skills, and help to understand and use government services via the Internet



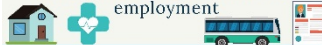
## GET HELP FLORIDA

Statewide portal helps users quickly and easily locate agencies to assist them



## RIGHT SERVICE AT THE RIGHT TIME

Search engine that helps people find assistance with daily needs, housing, healthcare, transportation and employment



## ASK A LIBRARIAN

virtual reference by chat, text, and e-mail

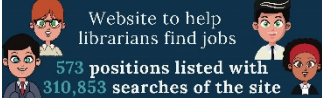


60,833 sessions x 1000



## FLORIDA LIBRARY JOBS

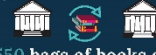
Website to help librarians find jobs



573 positions listed with 310,853 searches of the site

## STATEWIDE DELIVERY SERVICE

Sharing resources between libraries



211,550 bags of books delivered

## EXPANDING LIBRARY SERVICE

Division of Library and Information Services helps libraries develop services



## COMPETITIVE GRANTS

Funds provided to local libraries to help them do more and better!



Visit [info.florida.gov](http://info.florida.gov) for more information

Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funds are used in Florida on a statewide level to benefit all of Florida's residents. Individual libraries and organizations also use LSTA funds on local and regional levels.

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
DIVISION of LIBRARY and INFORMATION SERVICES

