



Legislative Guide

2015

Finger Lakes Library System
1300 Dryden Rd.
Ithaca, New York 14850
(607) 273-4074
www.flls.org/advocacy

Everyone loves libraries – but we can’t live on love alone! This guide will help you convince your NYS legislators that libraries matter and win them as allies to your library. Please also visit us online for talking points, advocacy toolkits, free webinars, and more at www.flls.org/advocacy.

If you have questions, FLLS is here to help. Please contact us anytime for resources and support for any advocacy or legislation issue.

Kristi Downham
 State Programs Coordinator
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Introduction



Why does state advocacy matter for my library?

Both your library and FLLS depend upon state taxpayer-based funding to ensure a strong economic future.

NYS Library Aid is allocated each year based on Education Law formulas. It comprises over 80% of FLLS funding, and the infrastructure FLLS provides enables our 33 libraries to share resources and costs that they cannot afford individually. Library Aid also provides LLSA funding, NYS Construction Grants, and NOVELNY Databases.

This funding has been cut dramatically in recent years to unsustainable levels (and disproportionately compared with other educational institutions), so we continually need to help legislators understand how important we are. These cuts are devastating to us, yet our funding comprises a tiny percentage of the total budget (full funding would be less than 1/10 of 1 percent). Legislators often picture libraries simply as buildings with books, so we must do all we can to help them understand our critical community role.

In addition to the yearly state aid, one-time Bullet Aid is sometimes available from legislators to libraries in their district. Fostering a good working relationship with your legislator is key to receiving this direct aid.

FLLS State Advocacy Campaign Efforts:

It is essential that we advocate together for library funding before the state budget is finalized in late March. The New York Library Association (NYLA) sets the legislative agenda for all NYS libraries each year in January. FLLS provides free transportation to the statewide Library Advocacy Day, and organizes a postcard campaign and a system-wide Snapshot Day in the weeks leading up to it.

It is especially important that we bring a strong showing of local library staff, trustees, and patrons to Advocacy Day to meet with their legislators in person. Remember, legislators always listen closely to their own constituents! If we don't show up with representatives from their district, they assume that we don't really need our funding.

FLLS also forwards NYLA legislative alerts throughout the year. These email alerts make it easy to contact legislators with the click of a button when an important bill is being considered. For even more impact, write letters and make phone calls. Even one constituent letter or call can have an impact on how a legislator votes.

Annual Advocacy Checklist for Your Library

It's critical to keep in contact with officials year round about your library so that you can develop a good working relationship with them:

- Add your legislators to your **mailing list**.
- Invite them to visit you** in person for a library tour or an event. They are always interested in good photo-ops! A Summer Reading event is often the perfect opportunity since the legislative session normally concludes by early July. *See p.25 for event planning tips.*
- Join FLLS at **Library Advocacy Day in Albany** to meet with your legislators in person. FLLS provides free transportation to this yearly event, normally held in late February or early March.
- Collect postcards** from patrons each January/February (supplied by FLLS) to help legislators hear directly from their constituents about library funding issues.
- Document and celebrate how essential your library is with **Snapshot Day** in February. It's a wonderful opportunity to host "library lover" events and collect statistics and photos for use throughout the year.
- Stay in touch with legislators throughout the year via **social media** – they'll love the publicity. On Facebook, "like" their page, share/like their posts and post on their wall; on Twitter: start a conversation or give them a "shout-out"; on Foursquare, "check in" to the location and tag them during visits.
- Write/call** legislators a few times per year, and always send thank you notes when you get a response. *See pp. 22-24 for a sample letters and a phone script.*
- Post a "Contact your Officials" button and "Library Value Calculator" on your website and Facebook during **legislative alerts** (see www.flls.org/advocacy)
- Join the **NLYA Action E-List** to receive timely alerts about email campaigns when libraries need support: <http://capwiz.com/ala/ny/mlm/signup/>
- Get the local paper involved:** Write a letter to the editor (and have trustees write them), and/or ask the paper to support libraries with an editorial. *See p.30.*
- Visit <http://www.flls.org/advocacy> to explore other advocacy resources and tools.

For more tips, please see p. 18, "Developing an Ongoing Relationship with Legislators".

Also, keep in mind that all of these steps will help you advocate for your library on a local level too! The quotes, statistics and photos you gather through Snapshot Day and the postcard campaign can be used for local advocacy efforts. Likewise, a strong personal relationship with your legislator can help you win Bullet Aid and other forms of direct support.

NYS Legislative Districts by Library

LIBRARY	ASSEMBLY DISTRICT	SENATE DISTRICT
Apalachin	124	52
Auburn	126	50 and 51*
Aurora	126	54
Berkshire	124	52
Candor	124	52
Cato	130	50
Cincinnatus	126	50
Cortland	125	51
Dryden	125	51
Fair Haven	130	54
Groton	125	51
Homer	126	51
Interlaken	132	54
Ithaca	125	58
Lansing	125	54
Lodi	132	54
Marathon	126	51
McGraw	125	51
Moravia	126	51
Newark Valley	124	52
Newfield	125	58
Nichols	124	52
Ovid	132	54
Owego	124	52
Poplar Ridge	126	54
Port Byron	130	54
Seneca Falls	131	54
Spencer	124	52
Trumansburg	125	58
Union Springs	126	54
Waterloo	131	54
Waverly	124	52
Weedsport	130	50

* Auburn's service area is split into two districts. Find your NYS Senator by searching with your address at <http://www.nysenate.gov/>.

The NYS Legislative Process

The Assembly, with its 150 members, and the Senate, with its 61 members, make up the New York State Legislature. Members are elected every two years. Each yearly legislative session begins in early January. One of their primary tasks is creating the yearly budget (due April 1).



The legislature attends session in Albany until the session ends, usually in June or July. Legislators can also be called back to Albany for special legislative sessions, formal meetings, committee work or public hearings.

The legislative process begins in committees. Committees in each house analyze proposed bills, hold hearings for public input, and vote on whether such bills should be advanced for consideration. Each member of the Senate and the Assembly is appointed to serve on three to five committees. Both houses have Library Committees.

After the bill is finalized and reviewed, the bill reaches the Assembly floor for debate and vote. If it passes, it goes to the Senate. Once it passes both houses, it goes to the Governor, who may choose to sign it into law or veto. A 2/3 majority of both houses will override a veto.

New York State Assembly

<http://assembly.state.ny.us/>

DISTRICT 124:

Assemblyman Christopher Friend (Republican)

FriendC@assembly.state.ny.us



Chemist, earned his PhD at SUNY Buffalo. Big Flats native and attended Horseheads High School. In 2006, he was Elected to the Chemung County Legislature in 2006, then replaced Tom O'Mara's seat in 2010.

Committees: Ranking Minority Member Children & Families and Local Government Committees. Also sits on Housing; Aging; Small Business; and Corporations, Authorities and Commissions committees.

Priorities: State government reform, reduced taxes, job creation/business incentives, right to bear arms, reduction of government spending, expansion of charter schools.

Year Elected: 2010

Represents:	District Office:	Albany Office:
Apalachin Berkshire Candor Newark Valley Nichols Owego Spencer Waverly	476 Maple Street P.O. Box 441 Big Flats, NY 14814 607-562-3602	938 LOB Albany, NY 12248 518-455-4538

DISTRICT 125

Assemblywoman Barbara Lifton (Democrat / Working Families)

LiftonB@assembly.state.ny.us



Former teacher. Served in 2009 as Chair of the Assembly Committee on Libraries and Education Technology, in 2010 as Vice-Chair of the Assembly Majority Steering Committee, and was designated as Chair of the Assembly Majority Steering Committee in 2011.

Committees: Agriculture, Election Law, Environmental Conservation, Higher Education, Mental Health

Priorities: PreK-12, as well as higher education, state support for all college students, and especially for SUNY campuses. She has also devoted significant time to legislation and advocacy dealing with the issue of gas drilling in the Marcellus Shale. She has worked on other issues of importance to women and families, including daycare, healthcare, and, notably, in the 2010 session, the licensing of midwives.

Year Elected: 2002

Represents:	District Office:	Albany Office:
Cortland Dryden Groton Ithaca Lansing McGraw Newfield Trumansburg	106 E. Court Street Ithaca, NY 14850 607-277-8030	555 LOB Albany, NY 12248 518-455-5444

DISTRICT 126
Assemblyman Gary Finch (Republican)
FinchG@assembly.state.ny.us



Small-business owner (Brew-Finch Funeral Homes), Auburn native. Extensive record of community service: Cayuga County United Way’s president and campaign chair and also on its executive and finance committees; a charter member, past president, and big brother of Big Brothers and Big Sisters; past president Rotary Club; past board member of Hospice of the Finger Lakes; and past member of Leadership Cayuga’s Curriculum Program Committee.

Priorities: Values higher education and heavily involved with Cayuga Community College: Finch has served the college in various capacities including Chair of the Board of Trustees and as a member of the Negotiating, Scholarship, Presidential Search and Strategic Planning committees. He has served on the Assembly’s Education Committee and continues to be a strong and knowledgeable advocate on educational issues.

Committees: Finch currently serves as Assistant Minority Leader to the Minority Conference. He is also assigned to the Assembly committees on Agriculture, Correction, Energy, Environmental Conservation, Insurance, and Rules. Finch previously served as

ranking minority member of the Assembly's Correction Committee and continues to be a vocal advocate on behalf of correction officers, their families and correction issues.

Year elected: 1999

Represents:	District Office:	Albany Office:
Auburn Aurora Cincinnatus Homer Marathon Moravia Poplar Ridge Union Springs	69 South St. Auburn, NY 13021 (315)255-3045	448 LOB Albany, NY 12248 (518)455-5878

DISTRICT 130
Assemblyman Bob Oaks (Republican)
OaksR@assembly.state.ny.us



Since 2011, Oaks has served as Ranking Minority Member of the Ways and Means Committee. The committee is responsible for analyzing the Governor's budget proposal. As Ranking Minority member, Assemblyman Oaks leads the debate on the final enacted budget.

Previously served as the Assembly's Deputy Minority Leader.

Committees: Rules, Ways and Means, Legislative Task Force on Redistricting.

Priorities: Agriculture, strengthening local government, reducing taxes, enhancing educational opportunities, and achieving government reform.

Year Elected: 1992

Represents:	District Office:	Albany Office:
Cato Fair Haven Port Byron Weedsport	10 Leach Road Lyons, NY 14489 (315)946-5166	444 Capitol Albany, NY 12248 (518)455-5655

DISTRICT 131



Assemblyman Brian Kolb (Republican)

KolbB@assembly.state.ny.us

Minority Leader

He served as an Adjunct Professor of Adult and Graduate Education at Roberts Wesleyan College. He is a former Chairman of the Finger Lakes Community College Foundation and is a former member of the Honeoye Central School Board and the Finger Lakes Community College Board of Trustees.

Legislative Priorities: reducing taxes, improving the quality of education, fostering economic development, providing sound health care and reforming state government.

Committees: Kolb currently serves as the Ranking Minority Member on the Committee on Banks, and is a member of several other standing committees. He is also a member of the National Conference of State Legislators, American Legislative Exchange Council, and part of the Heartland Institute's Board of Directors.

Year elected: 2000

Represents:	District Office:	Albany Office:
Seneca Falls Waterloo	607 W Washington St. Ste 2 Geneva, NY 14456 (315)781-2030	933 LOB Albany, NY 12248 (518)455-3751

DISTRICT 132

Assemblyman Philip A. Palmesano (Republican)

PalmesanoP@assembly.state.ny.us

Secretary of the Assembly Minority Conference & Ranking Minority Member on the Committee on Energy.



Committees: Tourism, Parks, Arts, and Sports Development; Corporations, Authorities and Commissions; Libraries and Education Technology; and Real Property Taxation.

Active in community affairs, Phil has served on the Steuben County Community Services Board; the Chemung, Schuyler, Steuben Workforce NY system; member of the marketing committee of Catholic Charities of Steuben County. He also has served on advisory committees for Camp Good Days and Special Times and the Greater Corning Chamber of Commerce Corning-Steuben Leadership Program, having been one of the program's inaugural graduates in 2008.

Committees: Corporations, Authorities and Commissions Committee, Energy and Transportation committees, House Operations (ranking minority member).

Additionally, Phil is a member of the bipartisan New York State Legislative Commission on Rural Resources, comprised of both minority and majority conference members from the Senate and Assembly, who work together on a wide range of issues including agriculture, economic development, education, environment, land use, local governments, transportation, and health and human services.

Year Elected: 2010 (newly representing this area in 2012 due to redistricting)

Represents:	District Office:	Albany Office:
Interlaken Lodi Ovid	105 E. Steuben St. Bath, NY 14810 607-776-9691 Fax: 607-776-5185	LOB 723 Albany, NY 12248 518-455-5791 Fax: 518-455-4644

New York State Senate

<http://www.nysenate.gov/>

DISTRICT 50

Senator John A. DeFrancisco (Republican)

jdefranc@nysenate.gov



Senator DeFrancisco currently serves as Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee. His position on this powerful committee allows him to play a significant role in reviewing the Governor's proposed budget and developing the Senate's priorities for the State Budget.

A community leader and education advocate, Senator DeFrancisco is also a former member and President of the Syracuse City School District Board of Education and a past Vice President of the Conference of Large City Boards of Education.

Legislative priorities: reduce crime, reform welfare, make government more transparent, hold the line on state spending, job creation.

Committees: Banks; Cities; Codes; Crime Victims, Crime and Correction; Judiciary; Labor.

Year elected: 1992 (newly representing this area due to 2012 redistricting)

Recent Bullet Aid Contributions to FLLS Libraries: 2014 gave \$2000 to Kellogg Library, \$3000 to Stewart B. Lang Library, \$3000 to Weedsport Free Library.

Represents:	District Office:	Albany Office:
Auburn* Cato Cincinnatus Weedsport	333 East Washington Street 800 State Office Building Syracuse, NY 13202 United States Phone: (315) 428-7632	416 Capitol Albany, NY 12247 United States Phone: (518) 455-3511

*Auburn's service area is splits into two districts. Please use your specific address at <http://www.nysenate.gov/> to find your NYS Senator.

DISTRICT 51

Senator James L. Seward (Republican)

Seward@nysenate.gov



Member of the Senate Library Committee.

In 2011, Seward became assistant majority leader on conference operations. He works closely with senate leadership in directing important legislation to the senate floor.

Senator Seward has been a consistent advocate for education, securing state aid for local districts to offset rising taxes and to support technology and special education initiatives within his schools. He strongly supported enactment of the STAR school tax relief program and has championed property tax relief.

Legislative priorities: jobs, business growth, tax relief, health insurance coverage/reform, economic development.

Committees: Agriculture, Education, Finance, Health, Higher Education, Libraries, Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities, Rules, Heroin Task Force.

Year elected: 1986

Recent Bullet Aid Contributions to FLLS Libraries:

2014: Gave \$2000 a piece to Groton Public Library, Lamont Memorial Free Library, Peck Memorial Library, Phillips Free Library, Powers Library, and Southworth Library. Gave \$3000 to Cortland Free Library.

Represents:	District Office 3:	Albany Office:
Auburn* Cortland Dryden Groton Homer Marathon McGraw Moravia	4030 West Rd. Cortland, NY 13045 United States Phone: (607) 758-9005	172 State Street Room 430, Capitol Albany, NY 12247 United States Phone: (518) 455-3131

* Auburn's service area is splits into two districts. Please use your specific address at <http://www.nysenate.gov/> to find your NYS Senator.

DISTRICT 52
Senator Tom Libous (Republican)
senator@senatorlibous.com



Deputy Majority Leader of the Senate.

In the private sector for 14 years at Chase-Lincoln First Bank and Johnson City Publishing. Johnson City native. He is a part-time instructor at Broome Community College teaching banking, marketing and finance.

His BOOKS program ((Books Open Opportunities for Kids to Succeed) makes library programming grants and book collection development available for the libraries in his district.

Prior Committees:

Transportation Committee, Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities, Senate Select Committee on the Disabled, Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Committee.

Legislative Priorities: fighting for stronger ethical standards in state government, cutting spending, YES! Safe Choices for Kids to help kids learn about the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse, and the BOOKS program to encourage kids to become better readers and bring and retain jobs to our area

Year Elected: 1989 (to 51st district, which changed to 52 in 2003)

Represents:	District Office:	Albany Office:
Apalachin Berkshire Candor Newark Valley Nichols Owego Spencer Waverly	44 Hawley St. Rm 1607 Binghamton, NY 13901 (607) 773-8771	429 State Capitol Building Albany, NY 12247 (518) 455-2677

DISTRICT 54
Senator Mike Nozzolio (Republican)
Nozzolio@senate.state.ny.us



Committees: Crime Victims, Crime and Correction; Elections, Finance, Housing, Construction and Community Development; Investigations and Government Operations, Judiciary, Racing, Gaming, and Wagering; Rules, Transportation, Heroin Task Force, Legislative Task Force on Demographic Research and Reapportionment,

Prior to his election to the New York State Senate, Senator Nozzolio served for 10 years in the New York State Assembly representing Cayuga, Seneca and Wayne Counties. He served as a JAG officer in the U.S. Naval Reserves and is currently a Commander in the New York Naval Militia.

Priorities: cut taxes, property tax relief, economic recovery/business growth, Medicaid reform, open, transparent budget negotiations.

Year elected: 1992

Recent Bullet Aid Contributions to FLLS Libraries:

2014: Gave \$20,000 to FLLS. Gave \$10,000 a piece to Aurora Free Library, Fair Haven Public Library, Interlaken Public Library, Lansing Community Library, Lodi Whittier Library, Edith B. Ford Library, Hazard Library, Port Byron Library. Gave \$20,000 a piece to Seneca Falls Library and Waterloo Library and Historical Society.

Represents:	District Office:	Albany Office:
Aurora Fair Haven Interlaken Lansing Lodi Ovid Poplar Ridge Port Byron Seneca Falls Union Springs Waterloo	119 Fall Street Seneca Falls, NY 13148 (888) 568-9816 FAX: (315) 568-2090	Room 503 Capitol Building Albany, NY 12247 (518)455-2366 FAX: (518)426-6953

DISTRICT 58

Senator Tom O'Mara (Republican)

OMara@nysenate.gov



Committees: At the beginning of the 2014 legislative session, Senator O'Mara was reappointed chairman of the Senate Standing Committee on Elections. In addition to his chairmanship, the senator also serves as a member on the following 10 Senate committees: Agriculture; Banks; Codes; Energy and Telecommunications; Environmental Conservation; Finance; Insurance; Investigations and Government Operations; Judiciary; and Transportation. He has also been named as one of five state senators serving on the joint, bipartisan Legislative Commission on the Development of Rural Resources, and as a member of the Senate Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction.

Priorities: outspoken in his opposition to the out-of-control spending in Albany, cutting waste in government, particularly in the state's burgeoning system of Medicaid. Revitalize manufacturing sector.

Year Elected: 2010 (served in NYS Assembly 2005-2010)

Represents:	District Office:	Albany Office:
Ithaca Newfield Trumansburg	333 East Water Street (3rd Floor, Suite 301) Elmira, NY 14901 United States (607) 735-9671	848 Legislative Office Building Albany, NY 12247 (518) 455-2091

Developing an Ongoing Relationship with Legislators

Your legislator's time is valuable, but he or she appreciates constituent contacts. Here are some ideas for how to most effectively develop an ongoing relationship with your legislator while advocating on behalf of libraries.



1. DO YOUR HOMEWORK.

Know the issues and the particular interests of your legislator. Keep a background file on your legislators, including special interests and personal profiles. You won't agree on all of the issues all of the time, but a legislator needs to know what constituents are thinking.

2. KEEP IN TOUCH.

Write, call, or visit your legislators and their staff members to introduce yourself. Let them know who you represent and volunteer to keep them informed about your issues, their impact on your community and on the legislator's district.

Add the legislator's name to your mailing list and ask to have your name added to the legislator's mailing list.

Make sure the legislator receives notice of and invitations to special events held at your library. This serves as a reminder of your library's role in the community. Remind your legislator that attending these functions is an excellent way to meet with constituents.

Invite legislators and perhaps their spouses to tour your library. Show them exactly what your library does and how it contributes to community well-being.

3. BE CONSISTENT AND RELIABLE.

Remember that official legislative priorities are set by the New York Library Association (NYLA). Make clear any differences between your opinions and the position of NYLA and/or FLLS. Remember that both NYLA and FLLS must be viewed as credible sources of information in order to be successful on behalf of libraries.

It is also not effective to mix discussion of your personal issues with discussion of library issues, or you will dilute your message and confuse the legislator as to your priorities.

4. GIVE CREDIT WHERE CREDIT IS DUE.

Give public recognition to deserving legislators through awards or at library functions to which your legislator has been invited. Always say "THANK YOU" for support of your issues. A personal thank you note is also very effective.

5. BE A PLAYER.

Attend events, social and other types, at which legislators will be present -- not to lobby overtly, but to get acquainted and make them aware of you as an active member of the community. Even if you can afford to give only a small amount of money, attending fund raisers is an important part of our current political process.

If the legislator has been helpful to your library, get involved in his or her election campaign. People who give their time, and who can recruit others to campaign, are very important to a legislator.

6. TELL US ABOUT IT.

Please let FLLS know about the concerns and interests your legislator has expressed, along with any commitment of support to library issues. It will really help us help you!

Reprinted with minor edits from Wisconsin Library Association, "General Tips for Working with Legislators" <http://wla.wisconsinlibraries.org/legislative/advocacy/general-tips-for-working-with-legislators>.

Lobbying Tips

A. Universal Lobbying Principles:

Five basic rules of effective communication for advocacy:

1. **Be Brief.** A Legislator's time is limited and so is yours.
2. **Be Appreciative.** Give thanks for past support and current action or efforts.
3. **Be Specific.** Refer to exact titles and bill numbers you want supported, and speak about specific local library needs. Refer to the legislator's own district's needs if you live or work there. Be specific about how people's lives are affected by the bill or issue.
4. **Be Informative.** Give good reasons why a bill or measure should be supported.
5. **Be Courteous.** The name of the game is respect. Ask. Do not demand or threaten. Be pleasant but firm, positive and polite.



Additional important tips:

- Be passionate, enthusiastic, and committed to your ideas and concerns.
- Do not whine, complain, or display anger.
- Focus deliberately on your message and never introduce non-library issues.
- Use simple language and avoid jargon.
- Be scrupulously honest and forthright in all communications.

- adapted from the American Library Association

B. How to Tell Your Story:

The most effective way to communicate to your legislators about the importance of libraries is often to share a library story or two that shows how your library makes a difference.

Effective stories...

1. are simple, brief and personal
2. have a beginning, middle and end



3. have a "punchline"
4. do not use real names unless you have been given permission
5. have a message
6. are appropriate
7. are specific
8. show the library/librarian clearly solving a problem or filling a need
9. illustrate your point in real-life terms.

A few carefully chosen statistics can be impressive, but personal stories offer a powerful emotional connection that brings your message to life. The most effective stories are not about what the library does. They are about the people who use and benefit from our libraries. They are the inventor who did his research at the university library, the school child who talks online to a scientist at the North Pole, the welfare mother who starts her own business based on what she's learned at the library.

-- *partially excerpted from "LSTA Success Stories", by Patricia Glass Schuman*

C. Meeting with Legislators in Person:

1. Be on time for your meeting.
2. Dress comfortably, but look your best (business casual is fine).
3. Identify yourself – trustee? friends of the library? library user? staff?
4. Be concise and diplomatic.
5. Be a good listener.
6. Put a local and personal angle on the issues.
7. Press for a commitment. Don't let your legislator evade the issue or change the subject.
8. Don't be intimidated! Your legislator is in office to serve you.
9. Don't guess. If you don't know the answer to a question, promise to provide one.
10. Say thank-you when you leave. Follow-up with a brief note, repeating succinctly the reason for your visit. *A sample thank you note is provided in this guide.*



D. Writing Effective Letters:

Second to visiting in person, letters are the most effective way to communicate with your legislators. They are extremely valuable at any time of the year:



1. Use the correct form of address for the legislator: "The Honorable John Doe."
2. If your handwriting is legible, write the letter by hand. If you prefer to type it, make sure you sign it with a hand-written PS.
3. Identify yourself and state your reasons for writing. Avoid clichés, and try to personalize your message with real-life stories and examples.
4. Be brief, clear and specific, and specifically reference the bill or issue by name and number.
5. Close with a direct question or statement about your legislator's position on a bill or an issue, and offer to provide further information on the subject.
6. Include your address on the letter and envelope.

• *A sample letter is provided in this guide on the next page.*

E. Making Effective Phone Calls:

Phoning legislators is an effective and easy way to make your voice heard. It is especially appropriate in time-sensitive situations, such as before a budget deliberation (letters can take weeks due to security):



1. Identify yourself by name, address and home town within the legislator's district.
2. Identify the bill or issue by name and number.
3. Briefly state your position on the bill/issue, and how you would like your legislator to vote.
4. Ask for your legislator's view on the bill or issue; be firm in obtaining a commitment to vote.
5. Show appreciation for his/her service or past votes. Be positive and friendly, and respect the legislator's busy schedule by keeping your call brief.
6. The legislator's aide may take the message. If this happens, simply identify yourself as outlined above and state how you would like your legislator to vote.

Sample Letter to Legislator:

Your Name
Your Street Address
Your City, State, Zip

Date

The Honorable John Doe
New York State Senate / New York State Assembly
Legislator's Address

Dear Senator Doe / Assemblyman Doe,

I am writing to urge you to restore Library Aid to \$102M in this year's budget, the full amount according to NYS Education Law.

As you may know, Library Aid has been reduced six times since 2008. Our current funding is at 1998 levels, which is not sustainable. Our libraries need adequate funding to serve their communities!

Libraries are essential providers of education and information to our communities, schools, colleges and businesses. Our libraries and library systems are the information backbone of our society – particularly in this new digital age. As educational institutions, for all ages, they are a key part of the solution when a community is struggling economically.

In these difficult economic times, people especially depend upon their libraries. Between 2007-2010, visits to libraries in NYS increased from 112 to 117 million. Jobseekers in particular need their libraries, often simply to apply to jobs. In addition to their free educational training resources, libraries provide free computers, printers, and internet access. Today, fewer than 44% of the top 100 U.S. retailers accept paper applications.

Time and again it has been shown that libraries are part of the solution to our economic situation. I hope you will support our libraries when the time comes to vote on the state budget.

Sincerely,

Your Name
Title

Sample Thank You Note

Your Name
Your Street Address
Your City, State, Zip

Date

The Honorable John Doe
New York State Senate / New York State Assembly
Legislator's Address

Dear Senator Doe / Assemblyman Doe,

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me last Wednesday about restoring Library Aid to \$102M in this year's budget, the full amount according to NYS Education Law.

As we discussed, in this rural area the library is often the only place that people can go to access technology, to fill out job applications, to continue their learning. Through the cost-sharing infrastructure that FLLS provides our libraries are able to offer numerous essential resources to their communities despite limited resources, but we can't live on love alone. In these difficult economic times, your support for sustainably-funded library systems is needed now more than ever.

As the great astronomer and author Carl Sagan once said, "I think the health of our civilization, the depth of our awareness about the underpinnings of our culture and our concern for the future can all be tested by how well we support our libraries". Last year's 4.9% funding restoration was a step in the right direction towards passing that test, but we have another 16% to go just to return to funding levels from nearly a decade ago. Please continue to represent the interests of our libraries by supporting a funding restoration this year.

Sincerely,

Your Name
Title

Inviting Legislators to Events

Inviting legislators to visit you is key to helping them understand what modern libraries do!

Extending the Invitation:



1. Give as much advance notice as possible. Ideally, send the invitation with at least 2-3 months notice. At minimum, give 4-6 weeks.
2. The invitation should look official -- on letterhead if possible. *A sample invitation is provided in this guide.*
3. 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 which event would make the best photo op.
4. Briefly paint a picture of the event for them, and think about how to convey how the event will fit with the legislator's goals and priorities. Key information to include would be:
 - Date/time/location (ideally, offer multiple dates/times).
 - A description of the event and the audience (teens? parents? educators?).
 - The estimated size of attendance at the event.
 - What their role will be, including if they will be expected to speak.
 - 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.
5. Give them a clear incentive to come:
 - Highlight if they'll be able to meet voters directly and take photos.
 - State what media outlets you plan on inviting, such as the local TV station or newspaper.
 - Create a role for them! Ask them to judge the bookmark contest or distribute awards to summer reading contest winners.
 - If the elected official has been supportive of libraries in the past, you may want to honor him/her at the event with a plaque or other recognition.
 - Let them know a photographer will be there.
6. After the invitation is sent, follow up in one week with a phone call if you have not received a response.
7. Find out if they have a library card, and if not, give them one at the event.
8. Don't be discouraged if your legislator declines. They are very busy and it is not personal! Just remember to invite them to the next event you have, and keep

them informed about the library by adding them to your newsletter mailing list, sending them a library card, and sending them articles and photos about your news and accomplishments. If the elected official has children or teens, you may want to pass along lists of recommended reading, bookmarks, etc. as well.

9. If your elected official can't come to your event, go to him or her. They usually spend time in their local office after the legislative session ends (normally by early July). Contact his or her office and schedule a visit. Consider bringing teens, trustees or other library supporters with you to talk first-hand about what the library means to them.

Planning the Library Event:

1. You don't need to create a special event just for the elected officials. It just needs to be an opportunity for the elected officials to learn a little bit about what a modern library does. Summer reading programs often offer the perfect opportunity for a visit.
2. Market the event aggressively to ensure a good turnout. A crowded library will help emphasize the important role libraries play in the community.
3. Designate a member of the staff or a volunteer to take photos at the event.
4. Create a take-away folder or packet for the elected official. It can include recent newspaper articles about library activities, photos, a fact sheet about the library, a list of upcoming events, your business card and more. You may also want to include advocacy resources, such as FLLS's talking points flyer.
5. Media: Send a media advisory a week in advance to the local newspaper, pennysaver, radio/tv stations, and online media. A few days later, call reporters directly to follow up. The best time to call is usually 10am- 2pm. Have a brief and simple story pitch ready (30 seconds) that covers when/what the event is, who will be there, and why it is unique/important to the community. If they are not personally interested, ask if another reporter might want the story. *A sample media advisory is provided in this guide.*

Follow Up:

1. Send a thank you note to the legislator, preferably handwritten.
2. Send photos you took of the legislator to him/her (ideally, both a hard copy and an emailed digital copy).
3. Evaluate the event: What went well? What could have gone better?
4. Write a post for the library's blog, Facebook page, and/or an article for the newsletter summing up the event. Send any print media (either your newsletter or local coverage) to the legislator's local office.

-- adapted from http://wikis.ala.org/yalsa/index.php/District_Days

Sample Event Invitation

Your Name
Your Street Address
Your City, State, Zip

Date

The Honorable John Doe
New York State Senate / New York State Assembly
Legislator's Address

Dear Senator Doe / Assemblyman Doe,

On behalf of the [name] Library, I am writing to invite you to attend our [Library Open House] on [date] at [time] at [location].

[The Open House] includes live music, refreshments, and a brief ceremony where we'll be giving certificates of achievement to [our teen volunteers, top summer reading achievers]. We'd love for you to say a few words about [youth volunteerism, literacy, the start of the school year] before the certificates are handed out.

In addition to seeing the impact of the meaningful programs and services that our library is able to implement thanks to your funding support, it's also an opportunity for you to visit with [teens, librarians, parents, future voters].

Many thanks for your consideration of this invitation. I will follow up with a call to your office next week to learn of your availability. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Your Name
Title

Sample Media Advisory Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: [Senator/Assemblyman Doe] Will Kick off Library Card Sign-up Month at the [Library Name]

CONTACT: Your Name, (xxx)xxx-xxxx, Email Address

WHEN: Date, Time

WHERE: Library Name, Address

WHO: *(list all notable participants)*

Senator/Assemblyman Doe

Name, Library Director

Name, Library Board President

Name, City Mayor

WHAT: September is National Library Card Sign-up Month! To celebrate, Senator/Assemblyman [Doe] will sign up for [his/her] own library card at the [Library Name] in [City]. [He/she] will also judge and present awards for the library's teen poster contest. The poster contest will feature submissions that encourage community members to get a library card for free access to everything from books to computers to movies to music. This event will also feature live music and refreshments, and community members of all ages will be in attendance to celebrate their library with the Senator/Assemblyman.

WHY: September is National Library Card Sign-up Month – a time when libraries across the country remind parents and students that a library card is the most important school supply of all. The observance was launched in 1987 to meet the challenge of then Secretary of Education William J. Bennett who said: "Let's have a national campaign...every child should obtain a library card - and use it." Since then, thousands of public and school libraries join each fall in a national effort to ensure every child does just that.

Please call or email [name of contact person] at XXX-XXX-XXXX or [email address] to confirm your attendance at this event. To learn more, visit: [your web page].

XXX

Senate Bullet Aid Thank You Letter

Senators are sometimes able to make one-time targeted "bullet aid" awards to libraries in their districts. Fostering a good relationship with your representatives is key to receiving this aid! If your library receives bullet aid award, be sure to give generous thanks both privately and publically. In addition to a thank you note, be sure to let the press know, and to write thank you notes on your website and social media feeds.

+++

Your Name
Your Street Address
Your City, State, Zip

Date

The Honorable John Doe
New York State Senate
Legislator's Address

Dear Senator Doe,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the *[library name]*, I want to thank you for providing \$[amount] of funding via FY2014-15 Bullet Aid.

This funding recognizes the important role that *[library name]* plays in our community, from helping people to find jobs to offering free cultural programs and reading materials to families looking to save money.

Your support demonstrates that your understanding that the library serves as a cornerstone of the community, and that it can continue to thrive only if provided with adequate funding.

We look forward to working with you during the 2015 Legislative Session to advance the library community across New York State.

Sincerely yours,

Your Name
Title

Ask Your Local Paper to Support Libraries with an Editorial

Every daily newspaper has an editorial board, which meets on a regular basis to discuss the news and choose topics and opinions for editorials. The editorial board also can endorse candidates for public office, take a stand on a variety of issues and urge voters to take a certain position.



As a citizen in the community, you can contact the editorial board to attempt to persuade it to take a position on increased state funding for libraries:

1. Requesting a meeting

Begin by calling your local newspaper and ask to speak to someone regarding scheduling a meeting with the Editorial Board. The person you talk with will want to find out the purpose and rationale for having an Editorial Board meeting on the topic of additional state funding for libraries. Your rationale might include:

- *You have noticed they've been covering the library funding issue and would like to weigh in;*
- *They have not recently covered the issue of library funding, which is critically important because...(see www.flis.org/advocacy for data);*
- *This newspaper is the best venue for discussing this important issue and I would like to discuss it further at an editorial board meeting.*

If you are unable to secure a meeting, ask if they would accept an op-ed piece on the need for library funding, written by you or in collaboration with other library supporters.

2. Preparing the presentation

For your presentation to the Editorial Board, bring other library supporters (trustees, seniors, teens, teachers, etc.) with different backgrounds and expertise to demonstrate the community's widespread support for increased library funding. Diverse supporters will also help you answer questions on a variety of issues.

You should also bring handouts on library funding issues and background materials. Including photos of library programs in action is always a good idea, as many people in

the audience won't already know what the role of a modern library is. Putting together a powerpoint presentation can also be especially effective! Visit www.flls.org/advocacy for talking points, data, and other advocacy tools to help you make your case.

The amount of time for your presentation may only be 10-15 minutes, so be prepared to present your case quickly and succinctly. Use FLLS's talking points to organize your thoughts, making sure to make connections between state aid for libraries and its impact on your own library and community.

One question you can always expect is "Why should libraries get additional funding when the state has an enormous deficit and everyone else is being asked to take a cut?" Some answers might include:

- Even in good economic times libraries did not receive an increase;
- Libraries are an essential service and not a luxury;
- Libraries at all levels are an important part of the effort to raise student academic achievement and we cannot shortchange our children's future any longer.

At the end of your presentation, ask the Editorial Board if they have any questions or concerns. They may be interested in hearing about some relevant statistics or a few stories about the people locally who depend on libraries for opportunities to learn and grow.

3. Follow Up

Write a short follow-up note or email thanking them for hosting your visit. If an editorial does run, encourage library supporters in your community to write letters to the editor in support of the editorial, and be sure to forward the editorial on to your legislators!

-- Based in part on the NYLA article "How to Schedule and Conduct an Editorial Board Meeting", www.nyla.org.

Advocacy Resources:

www.flls.org/advocacy

FLLS's one-stop collection of advocacy news and resources.

www.nyla.org / 518-432-6952 / info@nyla.org

The New York Library Association (NYLA) is the voice of the library community in New York. They advocate on behalf of all libraries and library staff to the state legislature and serve as the spokesperson on library matters to the media and public policymakers.

NYLA sets our legislative priorities and coordinates the statewide Library Lobby Day, Snapshot Day, and "Take Action" Legislative Alerts. They also offer numerous advocacy resources and tools on their website.

www.protectnylibraries.org

The *NY Libraries: Essential* campaign, coordinated by NYLA.

www.ala.org/advocacy

The American Library Association (ALA) offers extensive resources for advocacy and legislation issues, including an online "Advocacy University".

Additional Advocacy Contacts:

Micah Kellner, Chair of the Assembly Committee on Libraries and Education Technology

Represents library interests in the NYS Assembly

District Office: 917-432-2983, Albany Office: 518-455-5676

KellnerM@assembly.state.ny.us · <http://assembly.state.ny.us/comm/?sec=post&id=26>

Hugh Farley, Chair of the Senate Subcommittee on Libraries

Represents library interests in the NYS Senate

District Office: 518-843-2188, Albany Office: 518-455-2181

Farley@nysenate.gov · www.nysenate.gov/committee/libraries

Bernie Margolis, NYS Librarian & Assistant Commissioner on Libraries

518-474-5930

bmargolis@mail.nysed.gov