

PSLA Legislator @your library[®] Campaign

By Debra E. Kachel, PSLA Legislation Chairperson

Have you ever thought about asking your federal or state Senator or Representative to visit your library? Why not? Last spring members of the PSLA Legislation Committee personally visited with Pennsylvania legislators in Harrisburg to communicate the needs of school library programs. What really surprised us was that many legislators didn't know that school libraries or library media specialists are not required in schools. Many were amazed at the inequities across our state and the appalling age of library books in Pennsylvania—an average of 25 years old. It quickly became apparent that we have not been communicating with a key stakeholder group who can hugely impact standards and spending for school library services.

To remedy this situation the PSLA Legislation Committee has kicked off a new campaign called PSLA Legislator @your library. Webpages with extensive materials have been added to the PSLA Legislation website at <http://www.psla.org/association/committee/legislation/legislatorlibrary.php4>. However, the best part is that PSLA will provide you with a trained "event planner" to help you plan a visit. Tapping our many talented and dedicated retirees, the following PSLA members have been trained and are available to assist you--Connie Burlingame, Lin Carvell, Sylvia Firth, Marybeth Leary, and Bill Scheeren. Seven visits around the state are already being planned. You can be one too! Just contact me at dkachel@mansfield.edu or 717-393-6205 and I will assign one of our trained planners to you.

Here's the "skinny" on what you need to know:

Purpose/ Why?:

Legislators need to know about our instructional role with both students and teachers and many don't know what we do! Many do not know about the POWER Library databases and how invaluable they are to our educational programs. Our state legislature directly funds ACCESS PA and POWER Library! They need to

understand why stable and consistent funding is needed to ensure that students have resources with which to learn. (Did you know that eight other states annually allocate a specified dollar amount ranging from approximately \$1.00 to \$23 dollars per student for school library resources?)

What You Do:

Basically, you get a date approved, host the visit, arrange for photo ops, and send out "thank you's".

What the Event Planner Does:

Communicates with the legislator's office to set up the visitation, gives advice, arranges media coverage/press releases, and submits visit info to the PSLA Legislation Chairperson. (We are posting photos of each visit on the PSLA website.)

PSLA will also send a packet of prepared information (also found on the website) to the media specialist to share with the legislator. The packet contains research and data about the status of school libraries. The host/hostess adds a page of info about their school library (template on the website).

So, it's easy and you have a coach assigned to you to help. What could be simpler? Event planner Marybeth Leary loves it. She says that although she is retired she can flexibly fit this work into her schedule and can be available during the day to make and receive calls to legislators' offices when many of our working colleagues are busy in their school libraries. Media specialists who are planning visits say that they really appreciate the advice and help. We want these visits to be pleasurable and informational experiences for our legislators who will remember us when school funding bills are being considered. They will recall libraries filled with engaged students, school librarians teaching and helping students, shelves that need more up-to-date books, and technology in use or maybe needing upgrades. You need to give them those visual memories and with the PSLA Legislators @your library program, you can!

Resources for Struggling Readers

All About Adolescent Literacy (<http://www.adlit.org>), offers resources for parents and educators of struggling readers and writers in grades 4-12. The site has researched classroom strategies and articles that provide research-based and best-practice information for educators and parents. Visitors will also find a section with author interviews, booklists for tweens and teens, and plot synopses, discussion questions, and related titles for further reading.