Tips for Lobbying Your Legislator
CLA’s “Day in the District”
March 2017

What is “Day in the District?”

“Day in the District” is an effective way to build relationships with your legislator(s) by concentrating your time with the legislator in his or her district office, rather than at the busy State Capitol. Developing relationships with new legislators and bolstering your relationship with continuing legislators is incredibly important for the success of CLA’s advocacy platform.

Library directors, staff, Friends groups and trustees, literacy advocates, and other supporters are encouraged to schedule appointments with their legislators during the month of March.

These are intended to be friendly “meet and greet” style appointments where you and your colleagues have the opportunity to highlight some of the wonderful programs and services being offered by your library, and to also take the time to address specific legislative issues of importance to libraries.

Advocacy Issue: SCA 3-Dodd (library construction bonds – 55% vote approval)

Senator Bill Dodd (D-Napa) has introduced SCA 3, which seeks to lower the local voter threshold for library construction bonds from the current two-thirds vote to a 55% vote. CLA is the official sponsor of SCA 3 and we will be actively working to secure passage of the legislation in the legislature.

Please raise the issue of SCA 3 during your meetings with your legislator and encourage his or her support of the bill. Additionally, please ask your Assemblymember or Senator to consider becoming a “co-author” of SCA 3 by Senator Dodd. (If he or she is interested, please have your legislator contact Senator Dodd’s office directly.)

A recent document prepared by the California Research Bureau, on behalf of the California State Library, indicates that there are 21.6 million registered borrowers at public libraries statewide. 3.3 million of these borrowers are children aged 14 and younger. Public library usage is at an all-time high, so it is critically important that library facilities are safe, ADA compliant, and sizeable enough to serve their patrons. SCA 3-Dodd gives local communities the same tools that K-14 education has had for over a decade: to secure voter approval for local bond construction by 55%, instead of the current 2/3rds vote threshold.

Lastly, SCA 3 will be heard in two policy committees in the Spring – Senate Governance and Finance and Senate Elections and Constitutional Amendments. If your legislator sits on one of those two committees, please encourage their support when the measure is before them in April and May. (see list)
Advocacy Issue: State Budget

The Governor's 2017-18 State Budget does not include any new increases for library funding. Due to the Governor's concerns over a future economic downturn, as well as the uncertainty surrounding federal Budget issues, the Governor released a prudent Budget in January, which “holds the line” on current library funding.

The effort to connect public libraries to the high-speed, broadband “backbone” operated by the Corporation for Education Network Initiatives in California (CENIC) continues, but it will be imperative that the state include more funding for this effort in the near future. In particular, there is still a need to provide connectivity for numerous branch libraries, as well as those libraries that face geographic or other challenges that make them harder to connect to CENIC.

- If you are a library that has received a broadband grant and have connected to CENIC, please share your stories with your legislators regarding the improved connectivity and speed that your library is experiencing as a result of the grant funding CLA secured in recent State Budgets. If you are a library waiting to connect to the backbone and would be disadvantaged if you were not provided a connection grant, please indicate your support for continued funding.

Lastly, in the 2016-17 Budget last year the Governor provided $3 million in one-time funding for the purpose of encouraging greater digital delivery and inspiring innovation within the California Library Services Act. This money is currently being allocated by the California Library Services Board to the regional Systems for uses such as expanding Zipbooks, enki subscriptions, and the Simply E discovery app, among other programs. A report, by the State Librarian, will be due to the Legislature and Administration in September of 2017, demonstrating how the funding was spent. If it can be demonstrated that the one-time infusion of funding led to innovation and greater digital delivery opportunities, there may be an opportunity to build upon this effort, commencing in the 2018-19 Budget. Feel free to share examples with your legislator, regarding how your library can benefit from greater digital delivery programs such as those mentioned above.

“Meet and Greets” with legislators: building lasting relationships

Legislators elected under the new term limits law (2012) are allowed to serve in the Assembly or Senate for 12 years. This workplace longevity will allow legislators to learn about issues more substantively, and many of them will serve in key positions affecting library funding or library policy.

Even though many of these new legislators come from local government backgrounds, they may be unaware of the vital, creative, and life-changing programs your public library offers. Thus, “Day in the District” meet and greets become your opportunity to share those stories!

Due to term limits, many of the “library champions” for CLA have recently departed the legislature. CLA is looking for the next generation of “library champions” in the California State Senate and Assembly.

Could your legislator be our next library leader?
Participation is easy! Just follow these steps!

It's easy to participate in "Day in the District." Organize a group of library supporters to attend a meeting in the legislator’s district office. The members of the Senate and Assembly are very interested in learning about you and your work on behalf of public libraries and the issues you face. Here are some specific tips for scheduling your appointment:

1) The best day to try to schedule a meeting with your legislator in the district is on a Friday or late in the afternoon on Thursdays. (The legislature is in Sacramento from Monday until Thursday morning during the month of March.)

2) 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 CLA “Day in the District” webpage called, “Find your Assembly Member or State Senator.”)

3) The “meeting contact/coordinator” can then relay the time, date, and location information to the meeting participants, and can keep them updated should the schedule change.

4) The scheduler in the legislative office may ask who will be in attendance. Offer to email the scheduler that information.

5) On the day of the meeting, be prompt and plan on your meeting lasting approximately 20 minutes.

6) In advance of the meeting, determine who will lead off the discussion for your group and who will raise particular points, issues, etc.

Final tips for a successful meeting

Remember:

- Keep your meeting positive and friendly.
- Organize your key points ahead of time.
- Offer to serve as a resource and please leave your business cards and any helpful pamphlets or flyers about your library with your legislator and staff.
- Invite your legislator to tour your library in the near future or to participate in story-time events, etc.
- Days later, send a quick follow-up note, thanking your legislator and his or her staff for their time. Enclose your business card or contact information again.

Thank you for your participation!