

Legislative Event Planner

Originally prepared by Good Schools Pennsylvania for a school funding campaign

(http://www.goodschoolspa.org/take_action/contact_legislativeevent.php)

Hosting a legislative event is a way to inform elected officials about the Kansas Library Association legislative initiatives, as well as garner media attention. The following are action steps to help you plan your legislative event:

First

- Set the date, time and site for the event. Work with your legislator's office to determine what days and times would be best. The Kansas Senate and House convene on January 11, 2010, so ideally the event would take place prior to that date. Many legislators do travel back home on the weekends while in session, so that may be an option after the session convenes.
- Your event should be short; an hour or thereabouts is plenty of time.
- Send written invitations to legislators on library letterhead (if available). Once the legislator is committed to the time and date, it should be communicated that this event will be canceled if they cannot attend on that date (unless you have more than one legislator committed).
- You may also want to send invitations to local elected officials including school superintendents and principals, county commissioners, the chamber of commerce president, other business leaders, faith community leaders, and presidents of local civic groups.
- Make arrangements for light refreshments.
- When planning the agenda for your event, follow a schedule that would give library patrons, and staff a brief opportunity to tell their stories about the value of the library. If you do "pre-invite" others to speak on the value of the library,

make sure they know to keep their comments brief – just a minute or two.

- Follow up the invitations with a personal phone call and a confirmation letter once confirmation is made.
- Make copies of materials to distribute at the event.
- Create indoor and outdoor way finding signs for the event.

Before the Event

- Develop an agenda. Use the Kansas Library Association Governmental Affairs push card/initiatives as talking points for the event. Determine the order in which people will speak. Include introductions for legislators. For biographical information and committee membership about legislators, click on <http://www.kslegislature.org/legsrv-legisportal/index.do> Conduct a pre-run of the event.
- Draft a media advisory to announce the event and send it to your media partners the week before the event. Refer to the media advisory template in this kit. All media invitations should be confirmed with phone calls a week prior to the event and then again the day prior to the event.
- Arrange for a photographer.
- Confirm food plans for event.
- Call legislators to confirm their attendance a few days before the event.
- Complete nametags for guests and speakers.
- Create a sign-in sheet.

The Day of the Event

- Distribute the news release at the completion of the event. Fax or email it to those members of the press who did not attend.

- Consider making colorful signs and banners to post around the outside of the facility and in the halls and the meeting room where the event will be held.
- Supply a sign-in sheet. Nametags should be provided for all participants.
- Make sure to recognize elected officials and staff as well as other dignitaries in the audience.

Immediately After the Event

- Send personal thank you letters to all those who helped in the preparation for the event.
- Send thank you letters to all public officials and reiterate your key messages.

Other Publicity Ideas

- If your library publishes a newsletter, keeps a website or blog, write an article about the event and include photos. Send a copy of the newsletter to the legislator along with any photos they may be able to use in their own newsletters.
- Send a follow up news release with a photo of you and your legislator(s) to the local papers.

Sample Event Invitation

(Date)

The Honorable John Doe
State House (Room
Number)
Kansas Senate
Topeka, KS 66612

or

The Honorable Jane Doe
State House (Room
Number)
Kansas House of
Representatives
Topeka, KS 66612

Dear (Representative Doe or Senator Doe):

On behalf of the (Name of your library), I am writing to invite you to attend our (Legislative Event) on (time and date). This will be an excellent opportunity for you to hear from the members of our community – your constituents – about how much the library is valued in our community.

We all know that libraries are vital to the health of our community. Libraries help Kansans find information with job searches, resume writing, and educational opportunities. Libraries also help Kansans gain technology skills and save money by using our numerous resources. Libraries are a good value any time, and part of the community safety net in tight economic times.

At this event, you will have the chance to visit with library patrons, library trustees, staff, and community members and advocates who value libraries. We also would welcome your thoughts.

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. Thank you for your consideration of this invitation.

Sincerely,

(name)
(title)

Sample Media Advisory

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
(Date)

For more information, contact:
(Name/phone #)

(Your Library) to Host (Name of Legislative Event).

Who: Library patrons, teachers, community leaders, library trustees, library staff, and other library advocates who support the (Your Library).

What: Advocates will discuss the importance and value of the library during tough economic times.

When: (Date and time)

Where: (Place)

Why: The purpose of the event is to show support for the library.

Libraries are a good value any time, and a part of the community safety net in tight economic times.

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Sample Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
(Date)

For more information, contact:
(Name/phone #)

(Your Library) Hosts (Name of Legislative Event)

(City), KS. – Library patrons, teachers, business and community leaders and other library advocates met with (State Representative/State Senator) today to express their support for (Your Library).

Advocates testified to the value of the library in an attempt to let (State Representative/State Senator) know how important continued support is to (his/her) constituents and the prosperity of the region.

“We appreciate the time that (State Representative/State Senator) spent today to meet with us to learn about (Your library) and why so many of his/her constituents support the library,” said (Library director or trustee). “We recognize the important steps that our lawmakers have taken thus far toward supporting the library in our community and we look forward to their continued support throughout Kansas.”

For more information, please contact _____ at _____.

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Sample Event Agenda

Sign in, nametags		15 minutes
Welcome and Overview of Event		5 minutes
Push card talking points	Librarian or Trustee	15 minutes
Testimonies from library patrons		5-10 minutes
Legislator(s) Comments	Legislator(s)	10 minutes for each legislator
Close/Acknowledgements		5 minutes

Sample Event Script

- Welcome everyone. Recognize legislators and thank them for attending your event.
- Provide an overview of the day's agenda. Give background and context about why the event is important.
 - State funding for local library programs and services is lower than at any time in the last 12 years, but libraries report increased use and circulation.
 - Nearly 1 in 4 households in Kansas are still without access to the internet.
 - Local library boards of trustees are best positioned to establish policies and guidelines for the use of materials, programs, and services that best meet the need of their local constituencies.
- Speak about the push card talking points. Provide specific, local examples without compromising patron privacy.
- Give library supporters the opportunity to talk briefly about why they value the library.
- Allow legislators to comment about what efforts are currently happening or will be happening in the General Assembly or in his/her districts.

- Close the event by thanking participants and legislators for attending.

Sample Thank You Letter

(Date)

The Honorable John
Doe
State House (Room
Number)
Kansas Senate
Topeka, KS 66612

or

The Honorable Jane
Doe
State House (Room
Number)
Kansas House of
Representatives
Topeka, KS 66612

Dear (Representative Doe or Senator Doe):

I want to express my sincere appreciation to you for attending the (Name of legislative event) earlier this week. It was a tremendous opportunity for us to familiarize you with (Your Library) and the need for continued library support at the state level.

I urge you to work to maintain current levels of State funding for libraries, maintain Kansas Universal Service Fund support for Kan-Ed, and to preserve the local authority of local library boards.

I look forward to working with you in the future as we continue to maintain a quality library in (Your town).

Sincerely,

(name)

(title)