



CSLA

California School Library Association
Established 1915

“Legi-days” are events that an association or other group might call to invite members to a state building to talk - in person- with their legislator. These were held as all day events with gatherings ahead of time to outline the talking points before heading out to meetings, and then re-grouping for reflection and discussion of next steps. Since the pandemic, this method of connecting with elected officials at the state level has been replaced by zoom meetings.

CSLA, as a grassroots, member-driven organization, is committed to supporting members as local constituents in communicating with legislators. This guide invites you to take on the task of calling on your legislator or other elected officials such as school board members to support the mission of CSLA to have *fully-funded, fully-staffed school library programs* and to empower members to promote literacy, inclusivity, and equity for all California students through school libraries.

This communication can be an in-person meet up in the district office, a telephone call, and/or a letter (snail mail or email). The only requirements are

- You're a constituent,
- You clearly state the need and why it is important to the folks in their district (we will provide information on current issues as well as general talking points), ,
- identify steps that your legislator can take to address the need, and
- thank them for their time.

A follow up thank you letter with a brief recap after a personal call or meeting is important also.

Does that sound like something you can do once or twice a year for school libraries and the students of California? Once you're ready to go:

IDENTIFY THE ISSUE(S)

Be clear on what you are seeking, how it connects to the purview of the person you are contacting and what you want them to do. While you can rave about school libraries to an elected official, they are unlikely to take action without a specific ask.

Be prepared to:

1. *Name the issue.*
2. *Frame the issue:* how it affects citizens in their district - tell a story.
3. *Re-frame the issue:* describe how the issue *could* look: include the positive outcome and numbers. Include why it is important to them, as leaders to lead this charge.
4. *Action plan:* steps needed to make that change.
5. *Thank you.*

BUILD "THE ASK"

- Do you have a specific ask for your school library? (i.e. asking a school board member to support a 21st Century Computer Lab so all students have access to the K12 Online Content Project resources to learn information and media literacy research skills).
- Are you familiar with current legislation that CSLA has sponsored or has taken a position on? Check the [current legislation to watch or action page](#) on the website, check out the CSLA newsletter for legislative action updates, or email the VP of Government Relation to see if CSLA has talking points for these issues.
- If you do not have a specific ask but have a chance to meet with an elected official about school libraries, familiarize yourself with the [CSLA Legislative Priorities](#)

[Here is an infographic from the LibSlide Project](#) with the most current data (per our CDE liaison) on numbers in CA.

PREPARE to [Write](#), [Call](#), or [Visit](#):

- Identify which elected/appointed officials have the power to make the change you want.

If you want to write to someone in the CA Legislature, use this link to [find your elected member](#). Each legislator may have different means of contacting them and different protocols for setting up meetings. Look at their information page or reach out to one of their offices and ask how to set up a call or meeting. **You might be offered a call or meeting with a staff member**, which is great and may even be preferred as this is the person who helps the legislator make decisions on which issues to prioritize.

If it is a budget issue, find out which budget or finance committee controls those funds, and reach out to the chair of that committee.

If it is a local issue, find how to contact your School Board Members or City Council Members, or County Supervisors based on your local structure. Your Union can often help with this.

- Develop your talking points (choose what fits your ask).**

- Statistics/ Data**

- Find the statistics in your district - how many TLs are there, when are school libraries open - how many hours the techs work - what the literacy rate is,... share the STORY of your district.)
- [Here is an infographic from the LibSlide Project](#) with the most current data on numbers in CA.

- Early Literacy**

- Teacher librarians are specially trained to curate collections that appeal to students as readers. Research shows that access to diverse and relevant collections for self-selected reading is essential to supporting early literacy.

- Equity**

- CA is in last place in teacher librarian to student ratio in the U.S.
- EdCode stipulates all students have access to the expertise in information literacy instruction and collection development of a credentialed teacher librarian. See EdCode references [here](#).
- Access to current, diverse, and relevant library collections is an equity issue as students who live in library-scarce regions or whose families cannot afford extensive personal libraries often do not have access to libraries at school. This needs to change.
- Teacher Librarians work with their schools and district to create clear collection development policies to ensure relevant, current, and diverse collections are accessible to all students as well as clear policies for challenges to make sure that concerns are addressed fairly while protecting schools and libraries against censorship.
- The value of a Credentialed Teacher Librarian and Qualified Classified Library Staff:**
 - Media Literacy: Teacher librarians are the credentialed teachers authorized to to teach the Model School Library Standards which are the information and media literacy skills that are integrated into frameworks for other content areas.
 - Teacher Librarians and their ongoing professional development specialize in media literacy, digital literacy, transliteracy, and information literacy.
 - Teacher Librarians are trained to build collections to connect users to information and to foster lifelong reading habits.
 - Qualified Classified Staff are specially trained in library organization and strategies to foster lifelong reading habits, physical and esoteric spaces to encourage literacy, and a commitment to ethical use of information.
- Social and Emotional Well-Being:**
 - Libraries and library staff provide students access to information and privacy in seeking information they need.
 - Students use libraries to learn how to find valid and balanced information on topics urgent to their well-being.
 - Reading is a means for many to find an outlet for stress and to engage with creativity.
- Safe, inclusive spaces:**

- Libraries and library staff create spaces where students can find a calm, quiet energy of inclusion, validation, and safety that many students do not feel elsewhere on campus.

Write a Letter

- a. What to write:
 - i. Who are you and what is your relationship to school libraries ?
 - 1. Emphasize that you are a constituent
 - a. (NOTE: **Jeff Frost writes on behalf of CSLA, so you are writing as an constituent/library professional, but can mention you are a CSLA member**)
 - ii. Use your talking points developed above
 - iii. Include a personal experience
 - 1. A story of a student you've helped, or how you were helped by a TL, or
 - 2. How a class lesson changed for the better... anything that helps connect your experience with the issue at hand.
 - iv. Keep it concise:
 - 1. 1-3 brief paragraphs
 - 2. No more than one page
- b. Be courteous:
 - i. Use correct titles
 - ii. Be sure to thank them.

Call your elected official

- a. Call to set a time for a phone call appointment with your elected official or a staff member about school libraries
- b. Ask how much time you will have for the call and create a script using the outline for the letter
- c. After send a thank you note summarizing your main points clearly outlining your clearly stating the **WHAT, IMPACT, and WHY**

Visit your elected official

- a. Visit your representatives at their offices either in Sacramento or in your hometown by calling or emailing to set up an appointment with your elected official or a staff member.

- b. Use the talking points as suggested for the letter above.
- c. Create an outline clearly stating the WHAT, IMPACT, and WHY to leave with the person you meet with so they have something in writing.
- d. Include your contact information for follow up.

WHEN TO SHARE

Let CSLA Know About Your Action

- a. Use This Google Form to let us know about your meeting.

If appropriate, share on social media

- a. [Use this guide for an example of how to social media posts and #'s and handles](#) to amplify your voice and raise awareness about this issue and encourage others to reach out to their elected officials.

If appropriate, share with others

- a. Share this with other Organizations, Colleagues, Neighbors, and Friends. Ask them to reach out in support of your issue.