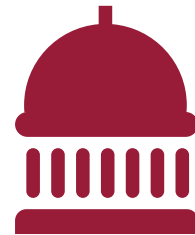




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# EFFECTIVE LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY

A Toolkit for  
School Board Members



**2022 Edition**



*Supporting, Promoting and Advancing Public Education*

# EFFECTIVE LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY

A Toolkit for School Board Members

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2022-2023 EDITION



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# WHY ADVOCATE?

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The state and federal government has a significant impact on your local schools. It is important to help those policymakers appreciate the effect of their decisions at the local level. School board members are ideally positioned to foster understanding of their district's needs and build support of public education in general with their state and federal lawmakers.

The WASB Government Relations (GR) staff provides high-quality, professional representation for Wisconsin school boards at the state Capitol and with state agencies and federal officials. The GR staff works to develop effective relationships with lawmakers on both sides of the aisle and with agency officials to advance the WASB Legislative Agenda and the resolutions adopted at the annual Delegate Assemblies. Our messaging has more impact and effectiveness with lawmakers when we are backed up by you with your own local arguments and examples.



Your position as a locally elected official gives you a level of instant credibility with your lawmakers and their staff. Through regular and effective communication, you can bolster that credibility and build trust so that your lawmaker will look to you when they need advice or information on issues affecting schools. This toolkit will provide the tools and information necessary to do just that.

You know best what is happening in your district and how a given legislative action is likely to affect it. To do what is best for your district, your legislator needs to hear from you.

If you don't tell your district's story, who will?

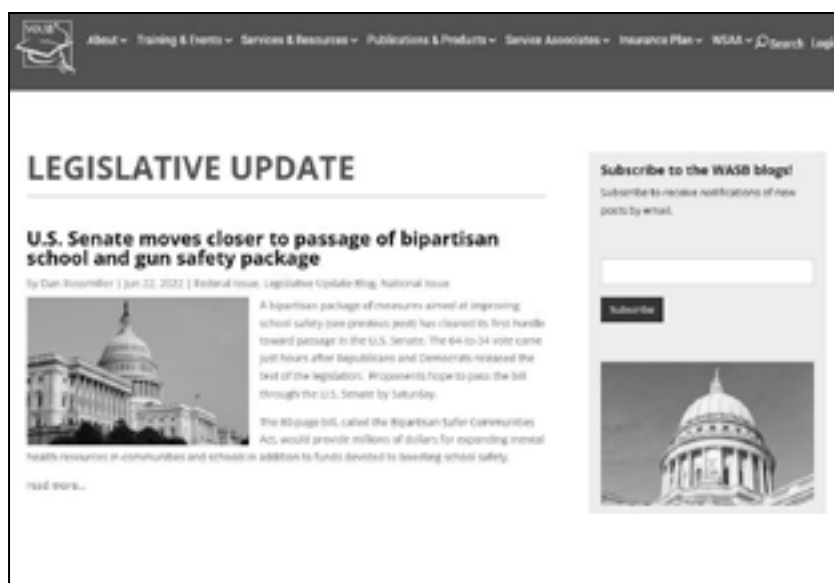


# THE WASB CAN HELP

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The WASB GR staff offers a variety of resources to assist you in advocating for the needs of your district:

- Follow the **Legislative Update blog** (<https://wasb.org/legislative-update/>) to get information about the latest developments in Madison and Washington, D.C. You'll be notified via email whenever new stories are posted.



- When something timely and important is happening that requires quick advocacy, we will notify you with a **WASB Action Alert** email. These emails utilize an advocacy software system that makes it quick and easy to contact your lawmakers with sample messages that you can customize to highlight the impact on your district.
- If you use social media, follow the **WASB Facebook and Twitter** accounts.
- Check out the monthly WASB Legislative Update webinars held at noon on the third Wednesday of the month. Additional webinars are offered at noon on Fridays during debate over two-year state budget.
- Advocacy information can also be accessed via our weekly e-newsletter the **eConnection**. This likely goes to your school district email address unless you have provided WASB with a personal email address.
- Attend the **WASB Day at the Capitol** at the beginning of each biennial legislative session. This important event provides school board members and administrators with an opportunity to hear directly from legislative leaders and meet with their legislators in the Capitol as the state budget is being considered.

- Attend the **Legislative Advocacy Conference** in the fall of odd-numbered years and hear from key state legislators and experts on important education issues.
- Attend **Advocacy Workshops** in the fall of even-numbered years in your area to get advocacy tips and post-election analysis from the government relations staff.
- Attend the annual **State Education Convention**, which features the governor and special issues sessions on important legislative topics.
- Attend **WASB Fall Regional Meetings** to get a legislative update.



# ADVOCACY AT THE BOARD MEETING

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School boards should agree on a legislative advocacy plan - whether by a motion, a general consensus, a written plan, or an official board policy (NOTE: Policy Resource Guide subscribers can access a sample board policy). A single approach likely will not work for every board. Find the best fit for your board, below are some options to consider:

- Identify a **Legislative Liaison** to track legislative issues and decide whether that person is authorized to communicate on behalf of the board/district without first obtaining a majority vote in favor of the specific advocacy position. This can be the district administrator, board president or another board member. A good first step is to have that person follow the WASB Legislative Update blog (see: The WASB Can Help, p. 3). The advantage of this method is having the ability to act quickly on time-sensitive issues, but it requires trust in the person given this responsibility.
- Create a **legislative committee**. The advantage of this method over having a single legislative liaison is to have multiple people vetting the board's position. The disadvantage is that meetings of committees still require the same open meetings law notice requirements as a regular board meeting, and it may be harder to advocate quickly on timely issues via the committee approach due to the need to schedule and post notice of committee meetings.
- **Discuss at least one legislative issue** during each school board meeting. The legislative liaison or committee can update the board on important developments.
- **Pass a board resolution** to take official positions on identified legislative issues and priorities. Assign the Legislative Liaison the task of communicating those official positions to your legislators (see: Board Resolutions, p. 12).



# COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY

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The goal of regular, effective communication is to build both a relationship and credibility with your legislators so that they will look to you when they need advice or information on K-12 issues.

**Your status as a locally elected school board member is an asset and gives you added credibility—don't shy away from using that advantage. Always mention your position on the school board when contacting your lawmakers. You are an elected official speaking to another elected official and you share constituents.**

Avoid speaking on behalf of the entire school board unless you are authorized to do so, or the board has voted on a position. “I am contacting you as an individual school board member and not on behalf of the entire board” is a good clarification/disclaimer.

Also keep in mind that written correspondence to elected officials is a public record that is subject to release under the state's public records law should someone make a request. While the chances of public disclosure are small, it is still advisable not to write anything you would not want to become public.

Having a relationship with your legislators will be beneficial to you not only for school-related issues but also as a private citizen.

There are many ways to reach out to your legislators: meetings (in-person or virtual), phone, email, social media, board resolutions. **All** methods of communicating can be effective. The important thing is to do it **REGULARLY**. Your method of contact is less important than being in regular contact—use the method that is easiest for you.

For any method of communicating with your legislators, keep in mind the following tips to make your contacts as effective as possible:

## **Things to Do:**

- Be polite and respectful.
- Introduce yourself as a school board member.
- Show gratitude. Thank your legislator for positions taken that you support or for their public service. Starting off with gratitude before turning to an ask is a great strategy.
- Be persistent. Don't let an unreturned message discourage you. Legislative offices can sometimes be very busy and hectic, and things can fall through the cracks. It's not personal, keep at it.
- Make your message timely. Send your message when the legislation is being considered. Look to WASB to keep you informed about the timing of critical stages in the legislative process.

- Prepare ahead of time. Familiarize yourself with the issue. If there are several points you want to make, have them jotted down and ready to go. WASB will provide talking points on major issues that can help you develop yours.
- Always include local examples and specific information about how a proposal will impact your school district and students if possible. These bolster your arguments and can hit home with your legislator more effectively than more generic, statewide talking points.
- Be prepared to educate and explain your issue to someone who may know little about your school district or how the district and your board operates. Be patient and strive for a message that is succinct, accurate and understandable.
- If you are contacting your lawmaker about legislation, use the Assembly/Senate bill number if you have it. WASB will always provide this in our alerts to you. This reduces confusion and ensures staff can determine exactly what you are contacting them about. If you don't have the bill number, describe the subject matter the bill addresses.
- Follow up after the vote. Thank your legislator if you agree with how he or she voted. If they didn't vote the way you asked, let them know politely and ask if you can follow up with them.

### **Things to Avoid:**

- **Being rude and disrespectful.** This will undermine your message and negatively impact your credibility. This, in turn, makes it less likely they will listen seriously to you (and your board) in the future. Successful advocacy is about building relationships, not weakening them.
- **Providing false information.** Nothing will destroy your credibility faster. If you mistakenly give bad information, follow up as soon as possible to correct your mistake.
- **Declaring opposing political affiliations.** Do not give them a reason to disregard your message or write you off. Avoid making issues partisan. Focus instead on the students.
- **In the heat of the moment.** Do not contact your legislator immediately after something happens that makes you emotional or angry. Give it 24 hours to think about it and compose your message. You don't want to say/write anything you will regret or need to apologize for later to maintain your relationship.
- **Do not assume you know their position.** If the governor or another legislator of the same party makes a statement or comes out with legislation, do not assume your legislator necessarily agrees with them. Ask for their position after giving them your thoughts.

# METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

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In addition to the effective communication tips in the previous section, the following are tips based on the method of communication chosen and the advantages/disadvantages of each.

## **In-Person or Virtual Meetings**



The advantage of this method is the legislator can put a specific issue together with your name and face. You may also determine certain things via body language and tone that you would not be able to in written communication.

To set up a meeting, call your legislator's Capitol office and make an appointment. Ask for the legislator's scheduler. Introduce yourself and briefly explain why you want to meet with him

or her. Be sure to mention that you are a constituent. Always call to confirm appointments.

**Invite legislators to your school board meetings** to give your full board a legislative update and/or the ability to ask them questions about issues or express views about legislation.

**Invite legislators to tour your schools.** While you want to show off all the great things you are doing, also make sure to take the opportunity to inform them of your challenges and needs. The more time they spend with you and your students, the more likely they are to support your cause (or at least understand it better). Take photos of the visit and post them on your website and social media. If your local newspaper covers your meetings, invite them to take a photo for the paper.

**Set up a meeting with your legislator in the district.** Some state senators have district offices for this purpose, most others will be willing to meet somewhere like a local coffee shop or diner. If a quorum or majority of your board attends this meeting, you may have to provide notice under the public (open) meetings law. You can avoid the notice requirement if fewer than a majority or quorum of your board attends. In-district meetings are recommended because they are most likely to be with the legislators themselves and you do not need to travel to Madison. Mondays and Fridays are generally good days to set up meetings in the district when the legislature is in session.

**Going to be in Madison** for any reason during the week? Call ahead and see if your legislator will be in the office or just stop by the Capitol and say hello to their staff. Introduce yourself to the staff person who handles education issues. When the legislature is in session, legislators are likely at the Capitol Tuesday through Thursday when legislative committees meet or when floor sessions are held.

**Check to see if your legislator may be holding office hours in the district.** From time to time legislators will announce that they are holding "office hours" or a "town hall" style meeting with their constituents. These meetings are typically held in a public place such as a town or village hall

or public library building and give constituents an opportunity to meet with their lawmaker in a one-on-one or small group setting to talk about issues and concerns. Often legislators will use press releases to their local newspapers to announce these meetings but increasingly they announce these meetings through their e-newsletters. You can go to your legislator's webpage to sign up to receive these newsletters which will also include other information about what they are working on.

## Tips for Meetings:

- When you call to make an appointment, let them know you would like **15 to 30 minutes** to discuss an issue. If you are calling about a piece of legislation and you know the bill number, tell them the bill number.
- **Make the most of the time you have with your legislator.** Practice beforehand what you want to say or, if it is a group, decide who will say what. Allow time for questions.
- **Be clear** and tell your legislator exactly what you would like him or her to do on an issue or piece of legislation. You don't want to leave them guessing. Make a specific request such as voting for or against a bill or offering an amendment.
- If you **don't know** the answer to a question that comes up during your meeting, **say so and follow up later.** Don't guess at the answer and in so doing create the possibility that you may unintentionally give false information.
- **Leave the door open for another meeting.** Let your legislator know you are interested in working together. You can provide valuable information and insight about how a proposal will impact your district and its schools.
- If possible, leave behind a **one-page fact sheet** with the most important information about your issue. Include your contact information.
- **Take your phone/camera** to take photos with your representative. You can use these on your website or social media, or send them to your local media. It's a way to show the community you are working with your legislators and gives them recognition for meeting with you.
- **Follow up** with a thank-you note or letter, reminding your legislator (or staff) what you talked about and the actions you asked them to take. Include the answers to any questions that you were unable to answer during your visit. Send them a picture from the meeting.

## Virtual Meetings

- **Keep your camera on.** Appear engaged in the meeting. Give your lawmaker your full attention and listen carefully.
- **Mute your microphone.** To help keep background noise to a minimum, make sure you mute your microphone when you are not speaking.

- **Be mindful of background noise.** When your microphone is not muted, avoid activities that could create additional noise, such as shuffling papers.
- **Position your camera properly.** Be sure it is in a stable position and focused at eye level, if possible. Doing so helps create a more direct sense of engagement with other participants.
- **Limit distractions.** You can make it easier to focus on the meeting by turning off notifications, closing or minimizing running apps, and muting your smartphone.
- **Avoid multi-tasking.** You'll retain the discussion better if you refrain from replying to emails or text messages during the meeting and wait to work on that PowerPoint presentation until after the meeting ends. Not only that, but it is also rude not to be paying attention to the conversation. If you are distracted, your lawmaker will sense that and may discount the message you are trying to convey and its importance.
- **Prepare.** If you will be sharing content during the meeting, make sure you have the files and/or links ready to go.

## Emails/Letters

- Include your **address and telephone number.** This will enable them to confirm you are a constituent.
- **Proofread!!!** Too often the speed and ease of sending email is reflected in poor grammar and sloppy spelling. Even if a staffer can determine your meaning, such errors reflect badly on your overall argument.
- If you want to comment on more than one issue, it is best to send a **separate message** for each one. That can help to ensure that you get a response to each of your concerns and they aren't overlooked.
- Invite the legislator to **contact you to talk about your position** on the bill or issue.
- **Ask for your legislator's position** on the issue and request a reply.

## Phone Calls

- When you call a legislator's office, don't expect to be able to speak with him or her directly. Rather, ask for the **staff member who handles education issues.** Take note of that staff person's name so you can follow up with them or ask for them when calling in the future.
- **Explain why you are calling:** create one or two talking points or key messages to focus the content of your message. Be polite and concise.

- **Ask for your legislator's position** on the issue. Expect that the staff person may not know this and ask for a follow-up phone call, email or letter. Tell them how you would like them to respond and provide the appropriate contact information.

## Social Media

- If you use social media, follow legislator accounts, particularly **Facebook** and **Twitter**.
- Most legislators have social media accounts, and many are very active.
- **Post photos** from an in-person meeting you have with your legislators.
- If they post something on Facebook or Twitter that you agree with, **LIKE** it. They will get alerts and notice when you do this. This can build goodwill.
- Seeing what they are up to via social media can give you useful information and small talk for when you meet in person or speak on the phone.
- You can follow the same guidelines as listed above for interacting with legislators through social media.
- While many legislators interact with constituents via social media, if you aren't having luck getting responses, try another method.

## Board Resolutions

Board resolutions are official positions voted on by your board at a meeting. We encourage you to pass resolutions on legislative issues and share those resolutions with your legislators, local media and the WASB. We compile resolutions on our website [WASB.org>>Advocacy & Government Relations>>Boards Taking Action] for you to use as samples to help guide your board's advocacy efforts. Frequently, the WASB will draft sample resolutions on key issues that we make available to local boards.

**While board resolutions are important and official acts of your locally elected school board, on their own they are not strong legislative advocacy efforts.** Board resolutions can be a vehicle to help promote greater awareness on the part of board members, the public and legislators of an issue or concern, but they aren't an end in and of themselves. Consider them the beginning of the conversation, not at the end.

In the legislature, resolutions in the typical format (whereas..., whereas..., therefore...) are largely symbolic efforts (think recognizing a long-time employee's retirement or proclaiming an official state cheese) and are not necessarily taken as seriously as they should be by legislative offices when they receive them. For legislative staff who are accustomed to responding to emails/letters that are clearly from individual constituents, it can also be confusing for them to know exactly to whom they should respond.



Here are some tips to bolster your resolutions as advocacy:

- Format your resolution as a **letter** or include a **cover letter** with a specified person (board president, board legislative liaison, etc.) for your legislator to respond to (see: Sample Materials, p. 25). There is no legal requirement to format your resolution in the traditional “whereas..., therefore...” format.
- Assign a board member to **follow up** with legislative offices after you send them your resolution. Ask if they received it and summarize your board discussion from the meeting on why the issue is important to your school district.



# LEGISLATIVE & CANDIDATE FORUMS

**Legislative forums** involving multiple school districts can also provide an excellent opportunity to delve more deeply into legislative issues and influence legislators. Districts can join together and share staffing and resources relating to setting up these meetings. In some areas of the state these are done on a monthly or annual basis (see: Sample Materials from Medford Area, p. 33). Some are held in the morning before workdays begin and are dubbed “Legislative Breakfasts.” **These are extremely effective in creating and maintaining relationships and an ongoing**



**dialogue with your area’s lawmakers.** There is also an accountability factor as legislators know they have to face the music at the next meeting for their votes and actions.

In even-numbered years, after the legislative session is over in March/April, campaign and election season begins. Half of the state Senate seats (either even-numbered or odd-numbered seats) and all state Assembly seats are up for reelection each even-numbered fall. A great way for your school district to play an active role in the election (and provide an important community service!) is to host a **candidate forum**. A forum is a great way to engage your community around an upcoming election, to build support for the issues that matter to your school district, and to learn more about the candidates running to represent you.

## Guide for Successful Legislative/Candidate Forums

### Plan Ahead

Pick a time and date to host your forum. Avoid religious or government holidays, dates when other community functions are scheduled, and business hours. Mondays often work well because state legislators are usually in Madison from Tuesday through Thursday during the regular session. For the site, a school building is ideal, but make sure you have adequate seating.

### Invite Legislators/Candidates

Legislative district boundaries typically determine which legislators/candidates to invite and which neighboring school districts to partner with. Send an invitation letter well before the planned event and follow up with a phone call. For legislative forums use the lawmaker’s official Capitol office contact information for invitations.

For candidate forums, candidate contact information is available on the Wisconsin Elections Commission website at <https://elections.wi.gov/>. Since this would be a campaign-related event, send invites to incumbents' campaign or home address rather than their Capitol office. The earlier you schedule your candidate forum, the better. Schedules typically get more crowded the closer you get to the date of the primary or general election.

### **Choose a Format**

There are numerous ways to structure a candidate forum including:

- Legislators/candidates give prepared remarks, and attendees ask follow-up questions from microphones in the audience.
- Legislators/candidates are asked prepared questions on legislation or themes important to public education and your community.
- Legislators/candidates are asked questions that the audience submits on index cards. At the end, candidates provide closing statements, with an equal amount of time given to each candidate.

In any format you'll need a moderator to introduce the legislators/candidates, start the dialogue, keep the discussion moving, and screen the questions submitted by audience members if that is the method you select. Ask a well-known, nonpartisan member of your community to serve in this role—a school administrator, school board president or a local media person are common examples.

### **Generate Interest**

As mentioned previously, consider partnering with neighboring school districts or even your local municipal officials. Working together with other districts allows you to reach more people and gain more exposure. Working with local municipal governments broadens the content areas that will be discussed and brings in additional interest and will also allow you to reach more people and gain more exposure. Inform the local media about the forum as well as any parent, teacher and other civic groups who may be interested in attending.

Spread the word utilizing newsletters, social media, local newspapers and/or local television or radio outlets. WASB can also help promote your event.

Send a media advisory notifying the news media about your event three to five days in advance. Consider allocating central, unobstructed space close to electrical outlets for TV camera crews and TV and radio reporters to cover your event.

### **Keep it Fair and Nonpartisan**

As a trusted, nonpartisan voice in the community, your school board and school district are uniquely suited to host a legislative/candidate forum. Working in your selected format and with your

moderator, try to ensure each legislator/candidate has equal time/opportunity to react to each issue or question.

For legislative forums, invite **ALL** legislators in your area regardless of party. Inform invited legislators about what is going to be discussed in advance, so they are prepared and can give substantive responses. Getting a bunch of “I’m not sure...I’ll have to look into it and get back to you” is not a productive dialogue. The idea is not to “stump” legislators, but to let them express their views and allow the public to make a judgment about them. If some legislators cannot attend, make clear to attendees and in your advertising that they were invited, and give the reason for being unable to attend, if any were provided.

For candidate forums, make sure **ALL** major-party candidates in that election are invited. Make a thorough and good faith effort to ensure the participation of at least two candidates for a specific office but you may proceed with a forum if only one candidate accepts. Again, provide the questions in advance to give candidates a chance to educate themselves and prepare a substantive response. Remember: candidates can become the lawmakers you will have to develop a relationship with after the election. If there is no incumbent or a challenger wins, this is a great opportunity to begin developing trust before they are elected.

Again, if only one candidate attends, make clear to attendees and in your advertising that other candidates or parties were invited to participate, naming names and giving reasons for nonparticipation, quoting invitees. If no reason is given for nonparticipation, then state that. This avoids the impression that you are taking a partisan stance by omission.

### **Take Notes**

During the forum, make note of the legislator’s/candidates’ positions and any commitments they provide. This will be useful in future communications and allow you to better hold them accountable for their votes.

### **Follow Up**

Send thank you letters to the participating legislators/candidates, any school district staff who assisted in making the arrangements, the moderator, timer, and any other volunteers.



# THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

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The foundation of successful advocacy is basic knowledge of the legislative process. Advocates need to focus their energy on the people making the important decisions when they are being made. Obviously, contacting a legislator after a bill has been voted on is not effective advocacy. When the WASB puts out information on bills, we will let you know where they are in the legislative process and who to contact.

## When to Advocate

**Bill Drafting** – Legislators often work with advocates to craft the language that will be included in legislation or to draft amendments to a bill that has already been introduced. This is most common and successful when advocates have an existing relationship with a legislator.

School board members can go to a friendly legislator and request that a bill be drafted to fund services, address a problem, change policy, etc. If you are willing to notify the WASB GR staff, please do as it is helpful to know that you are working with a legislator on getting something drafted. We can also offer our perspective and knowledge to help with the bill drafting.

**Bill Introduction** – when bills are formally introduced, they are assigned a bill number (Assembly Bill (AB) # or Senate Bill (SB) #) and referred to a committee.

When legislation related to K-12 education is introduced, the WASB GR staff will analyze the bill and cross reference it with our resolutions that have been adopted by previous WASB Delegate Assemblies to determine a position. Sometimes we will not take a position on a bill but will monitor it. We will then notify our membership of the bill and what it does and may ask you to contact your legislators in support of or opposition to a bill. We also archive all the K-12 bills introduced each session and the WASB position (if we take one) on a bill tracking chart on WASB.org.

**Committee Action** – most of the work done on a bill happens in committee. The chairperson of the standing committee decides whether to hold a public hearing and/or call an executive session to allow the committee to vote on a proposal--or they can let a bill die by failing to take action.

The WASB may ask you to contact a committee chairperson if a bill we support has been referred to his/her committee to urge them to hold a public hearing on it.

We will also notify you when public hearings are scheduled on K-12 bills. We may ask for members to come and testify or provide written testimony to the committee in support or in opposition to a bill. (See: Testifying at Public Hearings, p. 21.)

For the state budget bill, the Joint Finance Committee will hold typically 4-6 public hearings around the state. (See: Testifying at Budget Hearings, p. 23.)

**Floor Action** – bills favorably reported out of committee are placed on the Assembly or Senate calendar for debate by the full chamber. Legislators that support and oppose a bill are given a chance to speak about the bill during the debate. If the bill is not placed on the calendar, then action may not be taken on the bill. When debate concludes, a vote is taken to either approve or defeat a bill.

The WASB will notify you of the opportunity to contact key legislators in advance of a floor vote to tell them how you want them to vote, and how the debated bill would impact your school district. Your legislator may have your communication included in the bill folder they have with them on the floor and may even use your points in their floor speech to bolster their argument.

**Action by the Governor** – when the Governor receives a bill, he/she may sign the bill into law or veto the bill. If the Governor vetoes a bill, the legislature can override that decision with a two-thirds vote in both the Assembly and Senate.

For bills that we oppose and the Governor signals hesitancy about signing, we may ask you to take action by contacting the governor's office asking for a veto. When the Governor signs a bill that we support, there may be the opportunity to attend a signing ceremony if one is held. This helps build goodwill and generates positive publicity for elected officials.

For a more in-depth look, see:

The Legislative Process in Wisconsin: <https://legis.wisconsin.gov/lrb/pubs/legislating-in-wisconsin/legislating-in-wisconsin/>.



## Testifying at Public Hearings

Throughout the legislative session, standing committees hold hearings on bills. Testimony to the committee can often affect the outcome of a proposal, particularly when it is based on your experiences in your local school district. As a school official, your comments can be much more persuasive than those of a lobbyist.



- Write out your testimony in advance and bring about 20 copies to distribute to committee members. If you cannot make copies beforehand, the Capitol staff will make copies for you at the hearing.
- Notify the WASB if you plan to attend and testify at a public hearing. The GR staff will be in attendance as well and can help you with the logistics of the hearing onsite.
- If you've never been to a hearing before, it can be helpful to watch portions of committee hearings on Wisconsin Eye (<https://wiseye.org/>) to get a feel for how a public hearing operates. (Although current hearings are broadcast live for free, you may need a subscription to Wisconsin Eye to watch past committee hearings.)
- To testify, you will need to fill out a registration slip. Make sure you know the bill number or topic and check the "Appearing in Favor" or "Appearing Against" box indicating you are there to speak. Indicate on the form if you have time constraints as committee chairs are sometimes able to accommodate travel needs. Submit to the Capitol staff at the hearing.
- Bring a pen and notepad to use for taking notes.
- When you are called to testify, thank the committee chair and members for the opportunity to testify and identify yourself and your school district. If your legislator is on the committee, make a note of that. Keep your comments brief and to the point. Be prepared to lead with your local situation and examples of how the proposed bill will impact your district. Don't repeat the arguments made by prior presenters.
- Following your testimony, committee members may wish to ask you questions regarding your comments, experience or your district. Stick to your points and back up your comments with specific examples from your district. If you don't know the answer, acknowledge the question and offer to follow-up with an answer.

- After the hearing, take care to follow up on any questions you were asked during your testimony or requests for additional information, if any. Send copies of your testimony to your local legislators. Finally, feel a great sense of accomplishment for having participated in your state government as an advocate for your district and the students you serve. Well done!

## State Budget Timeline



The state works on a two-year (biennial) budget cycle, which begins on July 1 of odd-numbered years. The 2023-25 biennium will begin on July 1, 2023 and end on June 30, 2025. The preparation for the biennial budget, however, begins more than a year earlier.

### 2022

**June:** State agencies begin planning their budget requests.

**September:** State agencies submit their budget requests to the governor.

### 2023

**January–February:** The governor delivers the biennial budget message and proposes a two-year budget.

**March–April:** The Joint Finance Committee (JFC) holds public hearings on the governor's budget proposal, typically at 4-6 locations around the state. (See: Testifying at Budget Hearings, p. 23.)

**April–May:** The JFC modifies, deletes and adds provisions to the governor's proposed budget, and sends another version to the Legislature.

**May–June:** The Assembly and Senate majority and minority parties develop their own amendments.

**Early to Mid-June:** After the individual caucuses have finished deliberations, the majority party's budget package is introduced and scheduled for floor debate where the minority party will offer amendments. The budget bill is adopted by a majority vote of the first house, and then proceeds to the other house where it is amended and adopted in similar fashion.

**Late June:** If the Assembly and Senate approve separate versions of the budget, the differences are reconciled in a conference committee before a final budget is approved in both houses.

**June–July:** The governor reviews the budget bill. The Wisconsin Constitution provides the governor with extensive authority to partially veto appropriation bills. Once the governor signs the budget bill into law, minus any partial vetoes, it then becomes the state's fiscal budget document for the biennium. The Legislature has the authority to override any of the governor's partial vetoes with a 2/3 vote in each house.

## Testifying at Budget Hearings

Members of interest groups and the general public may testify before the Joint Finance Committee at the budget hearings held in March and April, while testimony from lobbyists is frowned upon. These hearings are a great chance for your board to provide testimony highlighting the most important issues for your district. The WASB encourages and facilitates school board member participation at these hearings and a member of the GR staff is present at each of these hearings to help with logistics and answer questions.

Budget hearings are run similarly to other public hearings of legislative committees (and the previous tips for testifying at public hearings also apply) but there are some differences to point out:

- Even if your legislator is not on the Joint Finance Committee (JFC), if a hearing is held in or near your district, **there is a good chance your local legislators will attend** (sometimes they will even fill in for JFC members).
- **WASB Day at the Capitol materials** will cover priority budget issues and are a great resource for preparing testimony.
- **Be prepared to wait** (perhaps for several hours) before you are called to testify. Typically, these hearings attract hundreds of people who wish to speak. People are called to testify in the order they register. In general, the earlier you are able to get to the hearing site and register, the earlier you will be able to speak. Consult with the WASB GR staff for information and assistance about getting registered.
- **Maximize your presence.** Because these hearings draw a crowd, a strict time limit will be imposed on those testifying (~2 min.). Those testifying as part of a group are typically given more time (~5 min.). To make efficient use of limited time, consider grouping together with other board members/administrators who can attend. Before you are called make sure everyone knows who is going to do the talking or how you are splitting up what you want to say. Two minutes can fly by, so don't spend time on pleasantries, get to the main points. You can bring a written copy of your testimony to the committee to explain your points in greater detail or cover additional points. The committee staff present on site will make copies for you and distribute them to all committee member offices when they return to Madison.
- Make sure **to check in with the GR staff** at the hearing or afterwards to make sure we know about your testimony and you are properly credited with board member recognition points. There may be hundreds of people at these hearings, and we don't want to miss anybody who deserves proper acknowledgement.





# SAMPLE MATERIALS

*For more samples and resolutions from other school boards check out the **Boards Taking Action** page on our website ([wasb.org](http://wasb.org))*

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## **Sample Email/Letter to Legislator from Individual Board Member**

Date  
Senator Jane Schmoe  
Wisconsin State Senate

(See: Who Are My Legislators? p. 48, to find email/ mailing contact info)

Dear Sen. Schmoe,

My name is John Q. School Board Member and I am a member of the Dairyland School Board in your district. I am contacting you as an individual board member and not on behalf of the entire board.

Thank you for the support you have provided the Dairyland School District and other public schools in our state. Investments of state resources for public schools in the 2021-23 state budget were appreciated as they enabled the state to secure one-time federal pandemic relief for schools. For Dairyland, in particular, increases in state high cost transportation aid and special education aid in state budget helped us to cope with increasing costs due to inflation. However, more consistent funding, especially annual increases in flexible, spendable dollars that match the rate of inflation are needed. In six of the past eight school years, there was no per pupil adjustment in revenue limits, straining our district's budget.

As you begin to consider the 2023-25 state budget, I ask that you continue to build on the investments made and allow school budgets to cope with inflation that is at a 40-year high. The number one recommendation of the Blue Ribbon Commission on School Funding established by legislative leaders was to annually adjust revenue limits for inflation (CPI). Please consider/support putting that recommendation into law.

Like many districts, Dairyland continues to have challenges with attracting and retaining quality staff and maintaining a breadth of programming for our students. Significantly boosting the current 31 percent state reimbursement rate for special education costs would help us tremendously. It would allow us to provide mandated services to students with disabilities without eroding programs and services that serve all students, including students with disabilities. We also want to work proactively to keep our students safe by providing mental health services and continuing anti-bullying efforts. We saw student mental health issues increase during the pandemic. Additional funding in this area is needed and would be appreciated to keep our students on track to learn.

Please feel free to use me as a resource for feedback on how certain bills or budget provisions would impact Dairyland. Our school board plans to regularly discuss legislative issues at our meetings, and I will be communicating the results of those discussions to you. At some point, we would like to have you attend a meeting to discuss legislative issues with us.

I also hope we can schedule a time to have you visit our schools and meet some of our students and staff. Please have your scheduler contact me to set up a time in the next few weeks.

Thank you again for your past support and public service. I hope we can work together moving forward to continue to support Dairyland and the students we serve.

Sincerely,

John Q. School Board Member  
Dairyland School Board  
Preferred Contact Info (Address, Email, Phone)

## **Sample Email/Letter to Legislator from Entire Board**

Date

Dear (Sen./Rep.) \_\_\_\_\_,

Congratulations on your (election/re-election) to the Wisconsin (Senate/Assembly). As school leaders in the \_\_\_\_\_ district, we look forward to working with you to make sure our children receive the best education possible to prepare them for graduation and the challenges of work, careers, military service, or higher education.

As the 2023-24 legislative session approaches, we are reaching out to you to share concerns that we and many other school leaders share. We ask that you please take these concerns into account as you and your legislative colleagues approach the state's 2023-25 biennial budget.

Like other employers, schools are facing rising costs due to the highest inflation rate in 40 years and supply chain issues. Inflationary pressures are making it harder for schools to attract and retain teachers and other support staff. Although school staffing challenges predate the pandemic, inflation is only making them worse.

Due in large part to an unprecedented influx of one-time pandemic-related federal dollars for schools, the 2021-23 state budget froze revenue limits and per pupil aid—the key components of state and local funding—for public schools. With no adjustment in state-imposed revenue limits and no additional per pupil categorical aid from the state, many school boards face either having to make cuts to programs and staff or having to use the one-time federal funds for ongoing/recurring expenses like salaries and benefits and utility bills. Neither of these is a desirable option. Cutting staff can raise class sizes and decrease opportunities for students and using one-time money for ongoing expenses is not prudent. At best, the federal money is only a short-term fix that will dry up in September 2024, creating a “fiscal cliff” for school district budgets. We need help with inflation and urge you and your legislative colleagues to address this concern by providing flexible, spendable resources for schools in the 2023-25 state budget cycle.

Special education state reimbursement rates are not keeping pace with the increasing costs of staff and mandated services for students with disabilities. As a result, schools statewide face well over a billion dollars in unreimbursed special education costs each year. With schools under state-imposed revenue limits, this can necessitate cuts in programming and staff for programs for all students, which, in turn, can lead to larger class sizes and reductions in elective classes. It also hampers districts' ability to hire, train and retain special education staff and provide mandated special education services to students with disabilities, which is a critical problem with special education teachers already in short supply.

Considering the above, we urge you to support the following for your local public schools:

- Providing an annual inflationary increase in spendable resources for public schools.
- Providing significant increases in state special education categorical aid.

Thank you for your public service and consideration of our request. We look forward to working together to help our district provide the best education possible to our students.

Sincerely,

Jane Q. School Board Member, Legislative Liaison  
On Behalf of the Dairyland School Board  
Preferred Contact Info (Address, Email, Phone)



## **Sample Board Resolution (Classic Format w/ Cover Letter)**

### **COVER LETTER**

Date

Representative Joe Schmoe  
Wisconsin State Assembly

(See: Who Are My Legislators? p. 48, to find email/mailling contact info)

Dear Rep. Schmoe,

As the Legislative Liaison for the Dairyland School Board, one of my assigned duties is to communicate board positions and resolutions to our state legislators.

Attached is a board resolution adopted by the Dairyland School Board regarding the importance of providing inflationary increases to per pupil revenue limits. Adopted school board resolutions represent official acts of our locally elected school board and the official position of the Dairyland School District.

We would be happy to explain the importance of this issue with you further, why we adopted this resolution, and answer any questions you might have.

Thank you for your service to our community as a state elected official. We look forward to hearing your thoughts and position on this issue. You can respond to me at the contact information below.

Sincerely,

Jane Q. School Board Member  
Legislative Liaison, Dairyland School Board  
Preferred Contact Info (Address, Email, Phone)

**BOARD RESOLUTION (Classic Format)**

**WHEREAS**, revenue limits restrict school district resources from state general aids and the local property tax levy, which are the two largest sources of revenue for districts; and

**WHEREAS**, since the 1993-94 school year, state-imposed limits on local school districts have restricted the amount of revenue a school district can raise each year through local property taxes and state general school aids on a per pupil basis; and

**WHEREAS**, revenue limits are determined by each district individually and are not dependent on changes in other districts; thus, each district has its own unique per pupil amount of revenue that it can raise; and

**WHEREAS**, a school district can lawfully exceed its revenue limit only by receiving approval of the district's voters at a local referendum; and

**WHEREAS**, increasing revenue limits through a per pupil adjustment is one of the main methods of providing additional resources for school districts; and

**WHEREAS**, throughout most of the 25-year history of revenue limits, lawmakers provided for an annual per pupil adjustment for inflation (i.e., increase) in the amount of revenue each school district could raise, which was added to each district's base revenue per pupil to help keep pace with inflation in school costs; and

**WHEREAS**, this method of providing additional financial resources to school districts was traditionally coupled with the state providing support either through general school aids or the school levy tax credit, giving school boards some ability to levy for the additional revenue limit authority, allowing for a combination of state and local contributions to K-12 funding and giving school boards some measure of local control of school district resources levels; and.

**WHEREAS**, since 2009, the financial resources available for school districts have not kept pace with inflation; and

**WHEREAS**, the WASB supports providing predictable annual increases in state general equalization aids and annual per-pupil adjustments to revenue limits to at least match inflationary increases in school costs.

**THEREFORE**, the \_\_\_\_\_ School Board calls on Governor \_\_\_\_\_ and Senator(s) \_\_\_\_\_ and Representative(s) \_\_\_\_\_ to support providing inflationary increases to revenue limits in the 2023-25 state budget to help school district budgets keep pace with inflation in school costs and to support indexing future per pupil adjustments to revenue limits by inflation so they continue to keep pace with increases in school district costs.

## **BOARD RESOLUTION (Letter Format)**

Date

Representative Joe Schmoe  
Wisconsin State Assembly

(See: Who Are My Legislators? p. 48, to find email/ mailing contact info)

Dear Rep. Schmoe,

As the Legislative Liaison for the Dairyland School Board, one of my assigned duties is to communicate board positions and resolutions to our state legislators. The contents of this letter were voted on and approved as the official position of the Dairyland School Board relating to legislative efforts to restrict school referenda.

Several Senate and Assembly legislators have introduced a package of six legislative bills to place various restrictions on school district referenda. These restrictions would affect both referenda to authorize debt and to exceed revenue limits and would include:

- eliminating recurring referenda to exceed the revenue limits, limiting the duration of nonrecurring referendums to exceed the revenue limits to five-years, and retroactively taking away a district's revenue authority from an already approved recurring referendum after five years;
- limiting when school boards could vote on an initial borrowing resolution and attempting to transfer board powers in this area to the annual meeting; and
- requiring school boards to include in the initial borrowing resolution and in the referendum question and notice of election the total amount of debt to be issued, the total amount of interest and related debt service costs to be incurred, and the sum of the principal, interest, and related debt service costs.

As you may know, when revenue limits were imposed on school boards in 1993, it was understood that if a school board did not receive adequate revenues under the revenue limit, it could always ask its voters to approve a referendum to exceed the revenue limits by a given amount on either a temporary (nonrecurring) or permanent (recurring) basis.

Because the State of Wisconsin has not consistently nor predictably provided inflationary increases in state aid or local revenue authority, school boards have come to rely on referenda to maintain programming and, in some cases, to continue to exist. We fear these bills will further exacerbate the trend of creating "Haves" who can pass referenda and "Have Nots" who cannot with the result that opportunities for students will be determined by their zip code more than ever.

Referenda can provide an opportunity for a community to have a very focused and robust conversation about what it wants its public schools to be. School boards propose referenda because they believe doing so is in the best educational interests of the students and communities they represent.

These bills are anti-local control and do not show trust in locally elected officials. The state should provide maximum authority and flexibility to our local school boards to manage the affairs of their school districts in the best interests of the students and communities they serve.

We urge you to oppose this package and would like to know what your position is on these bills. We look forward to working with you on this issue and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Jane Q. School Board Member  
Legislative Liaison, Dairyland School Board  
Preferred Contact Info (Address, Email, Phone)

Medford Sample Materials

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**The Medford Area Public School  
District Welcomes You!**



## Legislators



**Senator  
Kathy Bernier**

**Senate District 23 - Republican**

- Committee on Agriculture, Revenue and Financial Institutions
- Committee on Education
- Committee on Elections, Ethics and Rural Issues (Chair)
- Committee on Local Government, Small Business, Tourism and Workforce (Vice-Chair)
- Joint Survey Committee on Retirement Systems (Co-Chair)

Attending



**Senator  
Janet Bewley**

**Senate District 25 - Democrat**

- Committee on Education
- Committee on Senate Organization
- Committee on Universities, Technical Colleges, Children and Families
- Committee on Utilities and Housing
- Joint Committee on Legislative Organization
- Joint Legislative Audit Committee

Attending

## Legislators



**Senator**  
**Jerry Petrowski**

**Senate District 29 - Republican**

- Committee on Agriculture, Revenue and Financial Institutions (Vice-Chair)
- Committee on Economic Development, Commerce and Trade
- Committee on Transportation, Veterans and Military Affairs (Chair)
- Joint Legislative Council

Attending



**Senator**  
**Thomas Tiffany**

**Senate District 12 - Republican**

- Committee on Elections, Ethics and Rural Issues (Vice-Chair)
- Committee on Finance
- Committee on Local Government, Small Business, Tourism and Workforce
- Committee on Sporting Heritage, Mining and Forestry (Chair)
- Joint Committee on Finance
- Joint Survey Committee on Tax Exemptions

Unable to Attend

## Legislators



**Representative  
James Edming**

Assembly District 87 - Republican

- Committee on Agriculture
- Committee on Consumer Protection
- Committee on Forestry, Parks and Outdoor Recreation
- Committee on Health
- Committee on Labor and Integrated Employment (Chair)
- Committee on Small Business Development (Vice-Chair)
- Committee on Sporting Heritage
- Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs

Attending



**Representative  
Mary Felzkowski**

Assembly District 35 - Republican

- Committee on Assembly Organization
- Committee on Forestry, Parks and Outdoor Recreation
- Committee on Health
- Committee on Rules
- Committee on Sporting Heritage
- Joint Committee on Legislative Organization
- Joint Survey Committee on Retirement Systems (Co-Chair)
- Speaker's Task Force on Water Quality

Unable to Attend



## Legislators



**Representative**  
**Jesse James**

Assembly District 68 - Republican

- Committee on Children and Families
- Committee on Corrections
- Committee on Environment
- Committee on Family Law (Vice-Chair)
- Committee on Small Business Development
- Committee on Substance Abuse and Prevention
- Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs
- Speaker's Task Force on Suicide Prevention

Unable to Attend



**Representative**  
**Bob Kulp**

Assembly District 69 - Republican

- Committee on Jobs and the Economy
- Committee on Rural Development (Vice-Chair)
- Committee on State Affairs
- Committee on Transportation (Chair)
- Committee on Ways and Means
- Committee on Workforce Development
- Speaker's Task Force on Adoption

Unable to Attend

## Legislators



**Representative  
Beth Meyers**

**Assembly District 74 • Democrat**

- Committee on Aging and Long-Term Care
- Committee on Energy and Utilities
- Committee on Financial Institutions
- Committee on Rural Development
- Committee on Transportation
- Speaker's Task Force on Suicide Prevention

Unable to Attend



**Representative  
Warren Petryk**

**Assembly District 93 • Republican**

- Committee on Aging and Long-Term Care (Vice-Chair)
- Committee on Colleges and Universities
- Committee on Energy and Utilities
- Committee on Financial Institutions
- Committee on Insurance
- Committee on Labor and Integrated Employment
- Committee on Substance Abuse and Prevention
- Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs
- Committee on Workforce Development (Chair)

Unable to Attend

## Legislators



**Representative  
Romaine Quinn**

Assembly District 75 - Republican

- Committee on Colleges and Universities
- Committee on Education
- Committee on Housing and Real Estate
- Committee on Regulatory Licensing Reform
- Committee on Rural Development
- Committee on Science and Technology (Chair)
- Committee on Sporting Heritage (Vice-Chair)

Attending



**Representative  
Patrick Snyder**

Assembly District 85 - Republican

- Committee on Aging and Long-Term Care
- Committee on Children and Families (Chair)
- Committee on Community Development
- Committee on Corrections
- Committee on Jobs and the Economy (Vice-Chair)
- Committee on Mental Health
- Committee on Workforce Development
- Speaker's Task Force on Adoption

Unable to Attend

## Legislators



**Representative  
John Spiros**

Assembly District 86 - Republican

- Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety (Chair)
- Committee on International Affairs and Commerce
- Committee on Transportation (Vice-Chair)
- Joint Legislative Council

Unable to Attend



**Representative  
Rob Summerfield**

Assembly District 67 - Republican

- Committee on Colleges and Universities
- Committee on International Affairs and Commerce (Vice-Chair)
- Committee on Medicaid Reform and Oversight (Chair)
- Committee on Small Business Development
- Committee on State Affairs
- Committee on Tourism
- Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs
- Speaker's Task Force on Water Quality

Unable to Attend

## Legislators



**Representative  
Rob Swearingen**

Assembly District 34 - Republican

- Committee on Forestry, Parks and Outdoor Recreation
- Committee on Small Business Development
- Committee on State Affairs (Chair)
- Committee on Tourism (Vice-Chair)
- Joint Survey Committee on Tax Exemptions

Unable to Attend



*Thank you to our legislators,  
for taking time out of your schedules  
to spend time with your constituents to  
discuss various educational topics with  
school board members and administrators.*

*Your time and commitment are much  
appreciated.*

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# WELCOME!

## **Legislators:**

Senator Kathy Banner  
Senator Janell Bowley  
Senator Jerry Petrowski  
Representative James Edning  
Representative Romane Quinn

## **State Organizations:**

Michael Haynes - CESA #10 Director  
John Forester - SAA Executive Director  
John Ashley - WASB Executive Director  
Dan Rossmiller - WASB Govt Relations Dir.  
Kim Kaul - WIRSA Executive Director

## **Abbotsford:**

Sherry Baker - District Administrator  
Ryan Bargende—MS/HS Principal  
Georgia Kraus - Accountability Coordinator  
Don Mendenwald - Board President

## **Athens:**

Kenny Ellerbecker - Board Member  
Jessica Frahm - Board Clerk  
Julie Guenther—Board Member  
Steve Janke—Board Vice President  
Tim Krueger - Board President  
Jeff Mastin - District Administrator

## **Chequamegon:**

Victor Ambrose - Board President  
David Schmidt—Board Treasurer  
Michelle Schmidt—Board Member  
Roger Strand - Board Vice President  
Mark Weddig - District Administrator

## **Colby:**

Steve Kelden - District Administrator  
Cheryl Proechterman - Board Vice President

## **Greenwood:**

Todd Felhofer—District Administrator  
Jerome Krompasky—Board Member  
Mark Sham - Board Treasurer

## **Marathon:**

Ted Knoeck - Board Member  
Rick Parks - District Administrator

## **Medford:**

Steve Demt - School Board Candidate  
Ora Lee Diltich - Board Member  
Paul Dixon - Board Vice President  
Dave Freegel - Board President  
Joseph Greger - Dir. of Student Serv./Special Ed.  
Andy Guden - Activities Director  
Brian Hallgren - Board Treasurer  
Charles Hecker - RVA Administrator  
Justin Fraby - MS Assistant Principal  
Barb Knight - Board Member  
Al Leonard - MS Principal  
Laura Lundy - Dir. of Curriculum & Instruction  
Jill Lybert - High School Principal  
Dan Miller - Elementary Principal  
Corey Nager - HS Social Studies Teacher  
SuzAnn Schneider - HS Assistant Principal  
Pat Sullivan - District Administrator  
Cheryl Wibben - Board Clerk

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**Merrill:**

Dawn North - Principal  
John Sampie - District Administrator  
Britt Waller - Board Member

**Mondovi:**

Greg Corring - District Administrator

**Nashville:**

Jake Brunette - Board Member  
John Gaier - District Administrator  
Peggy Grap - Board Treasurer  
Deanna Heiman - Board Clerk  
Dewey Poeschel - Board President  
Sue Vogt - Board Vice President

**Northland Pines:**

Tony Duffek - Elementary Principal  
Scott Foster - District Administrator  
Josh Tilley - Assistant Principal

**Owen - Withee:**

Kir Anacker - Board Treasurer  
Angela Grieschner - Board Clerk  
Bob Hooks - District Administrator  
Charles Miller - Board Member  
Dean Schmeizer - Board Member

**Phillips:**

Paula Houder - Board Member  
Rick Morgan - District Administrator

**Prentice:**

Nick Adams - Board Member  
Randy Bergman - District Administrator  
Emily Blomberg - Board Member  
Lorrie Carlson - Board Treasurer  
Randy Erickson - Board President  
Dianne Gennan - Board Member  
Dennis Hartmann - Board Vice President  
Anna Mundi - Board Member  
Helen Fahrquist - Board Member  
Darrell Pierson - Board Clerk

**Rib Lake:**

Rick Cardy - District Administrator  
Jason Danahay - Board Treasurer  
Steve Martin - Board President  
Rolfe Thoms - Board Member  
Stacy Trusty - Board Vice President

**Spencer:**

Mike Erdreas - District Administrator

**Stratford:**

Carol Bartenstein - Board Treasurer  
Chris Dickinson - Board Vice President  
Scott Winer - District Administrator  
Brian Zaleski - Board Member

**Tomahawk:**

Terry Reynolds - District Administrator  
Deb Velleux - Board Member

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## 2020 AGENDA

5:00 p.m.	Registration, Light Meal and Refreshments	
5:45 p.m.	Call Meeting to Order and Pledge of Allegiance	Dave Fleege <i>Medford School Board President</i>
5:50 p.m.	Opening Comments and Introductions	Pat Sullivan <i>Medford District Administrator</i>
6:00 p.m.	Discussion Panels	Pat Sullivan <i>Medford District Administrator</i>
	Governor Evers' Plan to Invest the Excess Tax Funds	John Gaier <i>Neillsville District Administrator</i>
	Bill AB - 779	Scott Wrona <i>Stratford District Administrator</i> Charlie Hecke <i>RVA Administrator</i>
	Changing the Retirement Age	Al Leonard <i>Medford Middle School Principal</i> Corey Nazer <i>Medford High School Social Studies Teacher</i>
	Questions from the audience (time permitting)	
8:00 p.m.	Adjourn	

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## Two-Year Legislative Strategy



This is a sample strategy to show you how to make advocacy an on-going effort throughout the two years of a state legislative session. Throughout the session, the GR staff will be following developments and letting you know what's happening related to K-12 education. By following the WASB's communications (see: *The WASB Can Help*, p. 3), you will be able to react to issues at the right time.

### 2023

#### January: Start of State and Federal Legislative Sessions

- Adopt a board policy or review your existing policy that establishes a legislative advocacy process and designates a board member as a legislative liaison and/or creates a legislative committee.
- If you have ideas for legislation, relay those requests to legislators as early in the session as possible and notify the WASB GR staff.
- Attend the State Education Convention in Milwaukee to learn about legislative issues.

#### February: School Visits

- Invite your legislators to visit your schools. Show off state-funded programs and highlight programs that need increased funding.
- Alert the media and your community that your legislators will be in town for a "listening and learning" session.

#### March/April: Day at the Capitol

- Attend the WASB's Day at the Capitol to receive an update on state budget activity from legislative leaders and to lobby your legislators on budget issues.
- Adopt a board resolution on the most-pressing needs in your school district and the effect the state budget could have on them and distribute it to the appropriate state or federal legislators.
- Set up a legislative forum or invite legislators to a board meeting on school and state budget issues. Invite the media.
- Keep an eye out for in-district listening sessions held by your legislators and recruit a group to attend.
- Testify before the Joint Finance Committee (JFC) regarding your district's financial needs. (see: *Tips for Testifying at Budget Hearings*, p. 23)

#### May/June: Budget Action

- Contact your legislators with your positions on the budget approved by the JFC.
- Communicate with local community leaders to highlight the bottom-line impact of the state budget on your district.

### **July/August: Post-Budget/Back to School**

- Thank legislators for their budget vote or follow up if their vote didn't go your way.
- Invite your legislators to speak at a back-to-school event. Send notices to the media about the event and the legislators who will attend.
- Invite your legislators to the annual school district meeting.

### **September/November/December: Committee Work; First Year Wrap-Up**

- Testify before a legislative committee that is holding a hearing on an issue of importance to your district.
- Adopt a board resolution on any important bills or key items in your legislative agenda.
- Express any concerns you may have on bills to your legislators and work with them to resolve any problems that may develop.
- Attend the WASB Legislative Advocacy Conference. (November)

## **2024**

### **January–April: Final Months of State Session**

- Advocate strongly for any remaining issues and reiterate concerns to legislators.
- Follow legislation closely and stay in touch with your legislators.
- Attend the State Education Convention in Milwaukee to learn about legislative issues.

### **May–July: Summer Wrap-Up**

- Assess accomplishments and identify areas to be worked on in the next session.
- Publicly thank your legislators in-person, through your local media, or social media for the positive K-12 initiatives that they supported. Remind them of the ongoing commitment to K-12 that is required for student success and those issues that were not addressed.

### **August–December: Elections/Prepare for Next Session**

- Host candidate forums to get to know candidates for your legislative districts. Question them on their knowledge of education issues and positions.
- Attend the WASB Legislative Advocacy Workshops in November.
- Meet with your legislators or candidates-elect. Lay the groundwork for the next legislative session.



# WHO ARE MY LEGISLATORS?

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## State Legislators

You can find your legislators and their contact information by entering your address here: <https://maps.legis.wisconsin.gov>.

Alternatively, you can find your legislators and their contact information or leave them a message by calling the toll-free Legislative Hotline at 1-800-362-9472.



## Mailing Addresses

Senate  
P.O. Box 7882  
Madison, WI 53707

Assembly (Reps A-L)  
P.O. Box 8952  
Madison, WI 53708

Assembly (Reps M-Z)  
P.O. Box 8953  
Madison, WI 53708

## Federal Legislators

### United States Senate – [Senate.gov](https://www.senate.gov)

Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D)  
717 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510-4903

Sen. Ron Johnson (R)  
328 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

### House of Representatives – [House.gov](https://www.house.gov)

Find your representative and their contact information by zip code at: <https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>

or:

U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515  
(202) 224-3121



WISCONSIN  
ASSOCIATION OF  
SCHOOL BOARDS

*Supporting, Promoting and Advancing Public Education*

122 W. Washington Ave., Suite 400  
Madison, WI 53703

608-257-2622  
(Toll Free) 877-705-4422