

Advocacy Toolkit



Table of Contents:

4 Introduction

6 Accomplishments

7 Contact List

8 How to Talk to People Who Disagree with You

10 Iowa Legislative Information

11 Process for Ideas to Become a Law

12 Top Ten Quick Advocacy Tips

13 Bridge, Hook, and Flag

14 Advocacy Calendar



Introduction to Advocacy for the Cedar Rapids Public Library

Thank you for your interest in advocating on behalf of the Cedar Rapids Public Library. The purpose of this toolkit is to outline resources to promote the importance and value of the Cedar Rapids Public Library. These tools have been compiled to make it as easy as possible to share your support for the library with your friends, family, and community.

What is advocacy?

Advocacy helps to:

- Inform public library users and the community about library services and their value
- Demonstrate how public library services improve the lives of people in the community
- Ensure libraries have resources to continue offering these important services
- Secure a place at the table for library leaders where important funding and policy decisions are made

Why is advocacy important?

Library advocacy is important because it ensures we continue to have the means necessary to serve as a vital community resource supporting all community members. Regular and consistent advocacy with stakeholders means there is a greater chance of being top of mind when important decisions are being made.

We hope this toolkit will offer you the resources needed to advocate for the Cedar Rapids Public Library. Some examples of the messages we hope you will share:

- “The Cedar Rapids Public Library is a vital community hub that fosters lifelong learning, promotes literacy, and provides equal access to information for all residents.”
- “The library offers free resources, programs, and services that support education, professional development, and personal growth, contributing to a thriving community.”
- “Investing in the Cedar Rapids Public Library is an investment in our community’s future, as it enhances the quality of life, promotes economic development, and strengthens social cohesion.”

Content in this toolkit has been adapted from a number of resources, including the American Library Association Frontline Advocacy Toolkit, the American Library Association Advocacy Action Plan Workbooks, Committee on Library Advocacy, American Library Association and United for Libraries (2021), Center for Media Engagement - How to Talk to People Who Disagree With You Politically (2020), the Iowa Library Association, and the Ontario Library Association’s Advocacy Toolkit (2019).

It was prepared by members of the Advocacy Committee and CRPL staff, with support of the Board of Trustees and Library Director Dara Schmidt.

2024 Advocacy Committee Members:

- Jeremy Elges
- Rafael Jacobo (Chair)
- Elsabeth Hepworth
- Amber McNamara
- Megan Murphy Sayler
- Libby Slappey
- Clint Twedt-Ball
- Charity Tyler
- Sean Williams



Who We Are

Our Mission

Welcome to all.

Our Vision

My library champions discovery, builds connections, and strengthens community.

Guiding Principles

Intellectual Freedom

We are committed to the free and open exchange of ideas. We facilitate your access to information free of judgment.

Equity

Our library is for everyone. You are welcome here.

Privacy

We protect your information and your right to privacy.



Cedar Rapids Public Library Accomplishments

- 2025 - National Summer Learning Association Summer Learning Award

2023 - Campaign for Grade Level Reading, Pacesetter Award

2022 - The Gerald M. Kline Foundation and Library Journal, Jerry Kline Community Impact Award

2022 - Campaign for Grade Level Reading, Pacesetter Award

2017 - American Institute of Architects, Iowa Chapter, Excellence in Sustainability Award

2017 - Institute of Museum and Library Services, National Medal for Museum and Library Studies

2017 - Urban Libraries Council, Top Innovator Award, Summer Dare Everywhere

2015 - Library Journal, Landmark Library

2015 - American Institute of Architects & American Library Association, Library Building Award
- 2015 - 1,000 Friends of Iowa, Best Development Award

2014 - American Institute of Architects, Central States Region, Merit Award

2014 - American Library Association & the International Interior Design Association, Interior Design Honorable Mention

2014 - Shaw Contract Group, Design is...Award

2014 - GALE "Libraries Are Beautiful" Photo Contest, "Best Curb Appeal" Honorable Mention

2014 - Illuminating Engineering Society, Merit Award

2014 - ASHRAE Technology Award, Midwest Region, First Place

2013 - EBSCO, John Cotton Dana Library Public Relations Award

2009 - Library Journal, Librarian of the Year (Team Cedar Rapids)

Advocacy Contact List 2025

FEDERAL

Congress
Chuck Grassley <https://www.grassley.senate.gov/contact/questions-and-comments>
Joni Ernst <https://www.ernst.senate.gov/contact/email-joni>
Ashley Hinson https://hinson.house.gov/zip_authentication?form=/contact

STATE

State Senators
Liz Bennett liz.bennett@legis.iowa.gov
Molly Donahue molly.donahue@legis.iowa.gov
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State House Representatives
Jeff Cooling jeff.cooling@legis.iowa.gov
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Sami Sheetz sami.scheetz@legis.iowa.gov
Aimee Wichtendahl aimee.wichtendahl@legis.iowa.gov
Elizabeth Wilson elizabeth.wilson@legis.iowa.gov

COUNTY

Linn County Board of Supervisors
Kirsten Running-Marquardt kirsten.running-marquardt@linncountyiowa.gov
Brandy Z. Meisheid brandy.meisheid@linncountyiowa.gov
Sami Scheetz sami.scheetz@linncountyiowa.gov

Cedar Rapids City Council
Tiffany O'Donnell, Mayor t.odonnell@cedar-rapids.org
Tyler Olson, At Large t.olson@cedar-rapids.org
Ann Poe, At Large ann.poe@cedar-rapids.org
David Maier, At Large d.maier@cedar-rapids.org
Marty Hoeger, District 1 m.hoeger@cedar-rapids.org
Scott Overland, District 2 s.overland@cedar-rapids.org
Dale Todd, District 3 d.todd@cedar-rapids.org
Scott Olson, District 4 scott.olson@cedar-rapids.org
Ashley Vanorny, District 5 a.vanorny@cedar-rapids.org

Library Staff
Dara Schmidt, Library Director schmidt@crlibrary.org
Amber McNamara, Community Relations Manager mcnamara@crlibrary.org
Jessica Musil, Senior Administrative Assistant musil@crlibrary.org

How to Talk to People Who Disagree with You

It can be challenging to talk to people who disagree with you. In this study, the Center for Media Engagement interviewed people who live in communities with a mix of political beliefs to glean their best strategies for talking to those with whom they disagree. The results offer five main approaches to talking across political differences.

1. Focus on the people, not the politics

- Build a relationship before talking politics
- Don't take comments personally
- Share your own relevant experiences
- Give a relatable hypothetical situation

2. Find common ground

- Bond over less polarized issues
- Be open to listening and understanding
- Ask questions to understand a different viewpoint
- Focus on shared beliefs

3. Stick to the facts and avoid confrontation

- Stick to information that can be verified
- Back up your opinions with evidence
- Limit emotion in discussion
- Avoid confrontational language

4. Be an advocate rather than an opponent

- Adapt conversational style to audience
- Avoid words that might upset people

5. Pick your battles

- Talk about local politics instead of national politics
- Focus on policy instead of party
- Avoid hot-button issues

Duchovnay, Marley, Moore, Casey, and Masullo, Gina M. (2020, July). How to Talk to People Who Disagree with You Politically. Center for Media Engagement.

<https://mediaengagement.org/research/divided-communities>



Iowa Legislative Information

General Assembly 90
01/13/2025 - 01/10/2027

LEADERSHIP

Senate

President: **Amy Sinclair**
President Pro Tempore: **Ken Rozenboom**
Majority Leader: **Mike Klimesh**
Assistant Majority Leader: **Adrian Dickey**
Assistant Majority Leader: **Lynn Evans**

Assistant Majority Leader: **Carrie Koelker**
Assistant Majority Leader: **Tim Kraayenbrink**
Democratic Leader: **Janice Weiner**
Democratic Whip: **William A. Dotzler Jr**
Assistant Democratic Leader: **Molly Donahue**
Assistant Democratic Leader: **Izaah Knox**
Assistant Democratic Leader: **Cindy Winckler**

House

Speaker: **Pat Grassley**
Speaker Pro Tempore: **John H. Wills**
Majority Leader: **Bobby Kaufmann**
Majority Whip: **Henry Stone**
Assistant Majority Leader: **Jon Dunwell**
Assistant Majority Leader: **Heather Hora**
Assistant Majority Leader: **Craig P. Johnson**
Assistant Majority Leader: **Brent Siegrist**

Minority Leader: **Brian Meyer**
Minority Whip: **Sean Bagniewski**
Assistant Minority Leader: **Austin Baeth**
Assistant Minority Leader: **Heather Matson**
Assistant Minority Leader: **Ross Wilburn**
Assistant Minority Leader: **Elizabeth Wilson**



Process for Ideas to Become A Law

1. **Idea**
A legislator decides or legislators decide to sponsor a bill. Ideas come from many sources: constituents, interest groups, and government agencies.

2. **Bill Drafted**
The legislator requests or legislators request the idea be drafted into a bill by the Legislative Services Agency, Legal Services Division.

3. **Bill Filed**
The bill draft is sent to the Senate or the House where it is assigned a number and is then sent to the President of the Senate or the Speaker of the House.

4. **Committee Assignment**
The President of the Senate or the Speaker of the House refers the bill to a standing committee. A subcommittee, assigned by the standing committee, then studies the bill and reports its conclusions to the full committee.

5. **Committee Action**
The committee may pass the bill or pass an amended version of the bill. The committee may also send the bill to the floor without recommendation.

6. **Floor Debate**
The bill is placed on the calendar, a listing of all bills officially eligible for debate. At this time legislators may file amendments to the bill.
7. **Amendment**
The bill and any amendments filed are debated by the whole chamber. Amendments must be approved by a simple majority of those legislators voting.

8. **Vote**
A constitutional majority, at least 26 senators or 51 representatives, must vote “yes” in order for the bill to proceed to the second chamber.

9. **Second Chamber**
The bill goes through the same process in the second chamber. If the bill passes the second chamber without amendment, it is sent to the Governor. If the second chamber amends the bill it must be sent back to the chamber of origin for approval of those amendments. If the chambers cannot come to an agreement on the version of the bill, a conference committee is appointed.

10. **Governor**
After the bill passes both chambers in identical form, it is sent to the Governor. The Governor may sign the bill, veto the bill, or take no action on the bill.

11. **Law**
The bill becomes law upon the Governor’s signature or after three days during the session if the Governor takes no action. Bills received by the Governor during the last three days of the session have to be signed or vetoed within 30 days. If the Governor takes no action on the bill after the 30-day time period, the bill is considered vetoed.

Public Hearings

One way to participate in the legislative process is to attend or participate in a Public Hearing.
Public Hearing Schedule and Sign Up: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/committees/publicHearings>

Iowa Library Association

The Iowa Library Association (ILA) supports advocacy for the mission of Iowa libraries.
<https://www.iowalibraryassociation.org/index.php/advocacy>

They work with an organization in Des Moines to lobby on behalf of libraries in the state. A bill tracker can be found here: <https://www.ialobby.com/billtracker/ila>



Top Ten Quick Advocacy Tips

When library issues arise in public policy debates, library advocates should be ready to reach out to their public officials and persuade them to protect our libraries and rights!

1. **Get to know** your local elected officials. Do not wait until you need something to connect.
2. **Do your homework.** Reach out to the Cedar Rapids Public Library, the Iowa Library Association, or American Library Association for background on the specific issue and how best to frame the message.
3. **Know your audience.** Research positions of elected officials in advance. Understand what they care about and consider how your request aligns with these.
4. **Contact elected officials personally** if possible. A meeting is better than a phone call, a phone call is better than an e-mail, and an e-mail is better than no contact.
5. **Always start with a thank you.** Find something the elected official has recently supported which has a positive community impact and thank them for that.
6. **Keep it brief.** Share the most important facts and the few best arguments.
7. **Make it personal.** Explain how the issue impacts you and your family/friends...and their constituents!
8. **Make a clear request.** Ask them specifically to SUPPORT the legislation, or OPPOSE the legislation, or help to change the legislation.
9. **Be polite, but direct,** and try to get a commitment to support the library position.
10. **Follow up.** Once the issue is resolved, make sure to thank those that supported the library, and know that more work needs to be done with those that did not.



Guide the Conversation: Bridge, Hook, and Flag

These are three techniques to stay on track in a conversation or an interview to ensure the main point or points you want remembered get across to your elected official, legislator, or legislative staff member.

Bridge. This technique will allow you to move from an area in the conversation that you don't want to discuss or that has the potential to sidetrack the issue, and get the conversation back to your message. If the legislator says, for example, "Why shouldn't we be supporting policy that will help software companies? Isn't a good economy good for libraries?" Rather than getting into a discussion about the economy and whether or not new legislation will help the economy overall, you can use this as a platform for your point by saying: "I think the real question is . . ." and go back to your main point. For example, "I think the real question is "doesn't everyone benefit from good consumer laws?" Then, answer that question!

Hook. This is a technique that can lead your listener to follow-up on your first point, allowing you to get a second point in. For example, you can say, "There are two very important considerations that must be taken into account before you support this proposed policy. The first is . . ." then expand on that point. It is likely that the legislator or staff person will then ask you (or allow you) to follow up with the second point. This keeps the conversational ball in your court longer and gives you the opportunity to make both (or all points).

Flag. This technique is the easiest, and most people use it unconsciously all the time. Flagging alerts your listeners to what you consider most important. It's a good way to emphasize the key point or points you want the audience to remember. Flagging is simply giving your audience a verbal clue about what is important: "The most important thing to remember is . . ." or "If you remember nothing else, please remember these two points . . ."

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Year-Round Advocacy Calendar

Use this as a general guide to engage with stakeholders throughout the calendar year.

January

Welcome new members of the state legislature. Mark important state legislative dates on your calendar. The first day of the session is January 12, 2026.

February

Participate in ILA's Capitol Day in Des Moines. Participate in Lobby from Home Day through the Iowa Library Association (ILA). Explore ILA's Lobby from Home Guide for tips. Celebrate National Library Lovers Month" by sharing your favorite library stories with your family and friends.

March

Check the ILA website at the beginning of the year for specific dates and times. Check with the library for areas of advocacy around state legislation. **Watch for the first and second legislative funnels at the state legislature.**

April

Celebrate National Library Week April 19-25, 2026. Celebrate Right to Read Day on April 20, 2026.

May

April 21 is the final day of the legislative session unless the calendar is adjusted during the session. Thank your elected officials for their support during the legislative session. Encourage them to visit the library during the summer to see it in action. Register for the summer learning program and encourage your friends and family to do the same.

June

Summer is the busiest time of year the library! Be sure to encourage friends and family to participate in the summer learning program. Share library social media posts to help spread the word about events happening all summer long.

July

Connect with local elected officials on the start of a new fiscal year. Send a note to a city council member or county supervisor. Thank them for their continued support. Ask them to reach out if they'd like a tour or to speak in person about the library.

August

Celebrate back to school season by sharing information about Dolly Parton's Imagination Library! Encourage anyone you know with small children to enroll. Take enrollment cards to your local church or social group and encourage them to register for this amazing resource.

September

Celebrate National Library Card Sign Up Month with the library. Tag local and state elected officials in social media posts encouraging people to sign up for a library card. Share stories and information from the library in your own social media accounts.

October

This is an election year. Keep an eye on local and state elections. Coordinate with your peers and the library to connect with candidates. Share the library's annual report and OPEN+ magazine. Encourage them to visit the library.

November

Veteran's Day is November 11. This is a great opportunity to highlight the resources the library offers to veterans.

December

The end of one calendar year means the next legislative session is coming soon. Be sure to reach out to elected officials and invite them to events, thank them for their support, and encourage them to connect with the library.

<https://www.ala.org/advocacy/advocatetoolbox>

