



American Society of
Landscape Architects



Harrisburg, PA

ASLA Guide for Conducting A State Advocacy Day

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1.0 Overview

Ad·vo·ca·cy *noun* 1. the act or process of supporting a cause or proposal

The Founding Fathers of the United States understood the importance of advocacy, drafting the First Amendment in the Bill of Rights to declare “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

Hosting a State Advocacy Day is not only a constitutional right, but it offers valuable opportunities for ASLA chapters to...

- Initiate, develop, and maintain relationships with state government and agency officials.
- Influence legislation that impacts landscape architects.
- Raise the visibility of the profession, and the chapter, through face-to-face advocacy and education of public officials.

The goal of an advocacy day is to build relationships with state officials and discuss issues of importance to landscape architects. These points of contact foster relationship building and provide an opportunity for chapter members to become a resource to a state legislator. It is preferable to begin building the relationship with your legislator when you do not need anything from them. If a relationship has long been established, it is easier to approach with an “ask” if a crisis arises.

1.1 Types of State Advocacy Days

There are numerous ways chapters can organize a State Advocacy Day! Chapter abilities and legislative body procedures and customs will greatly affect how a chapter ultimately decides to execute their event. Chapters should consider executing one or several of the following types of State Advocacy Days:

- **Traditional Advocacy Day:** Meet with legislators and their staff at the state capitol. Possibilities include strategically utilizing a small group of advocates to meet with targeted legislators, or a large group from a diverse geographic area meeting with their respective representatives.
- **Legislative Breakfast/Evening Reception:** Host your event in or near the state capitol (food provided), allowing legislators and staff to make a brief appearance (plus free food!). If your chapter has a state PAC, a fundraising reception for legislators is also an option.
- **Exhibit Space:** Most legislatures have a designated space for public exhibits, often in well-trafficked areas. This space can be used for chapter advocacy efforts, allowing legislators and their staff to briefly stop by and learn about landscape architecture and the profession's impact on the state.
- **State Agency Meetings:** Instead of, or in addition to, meeting with state legislators, set-up targeted meetings with agency officials to educate them on the design work of landscape architects. This method allows chapters the opportunity to influence agency policies.

Tip: Check the legislature's website for ethics rules and laws. For example, states may have rules associated a breakfast or reception, and/or the costs associated with them.



1.2 Who Should Participate?

Depending upon the type of State Advocacy Day, the number of participants can vary. An advocacy day targeting specific legislators may include only the chapter's executive committee and/or a small group of others, such as principles from the most influential firms in the state. On the other hand, an advocacy day focused on reaching the full legislature would comprise a critical mass of chapter members representing diverse geographic areas to reach a greater number of legislators. Ideally, there should be at least one advocate who is a constituent for each legislative office visited.

Tip: If you cannot find a participant that is a constituent for a certain legislator, ask an ASLA member with a landscape architecture project in the legislator's district to attend.

State Advocacy Day Participant Recruitment:

- Invite chapter members to participate by email or via your chapter newsletter.
- Publicize your advocacy day on your website, Facebook, and Twitter platforms.
- For a smaller strategic advocacy day...
 - First identify key legislators.
 - Second recruit suitable chapter members more aggressively for those districts.

Tip: ASLA National can help chapters with recruitment for State Advocacy Days.

Please contact us for assistance at governmentaffairs@asla.org

2.0 Before Your Advocacy Day

2.1 Logistics: When & Where

Use the following questions to guide the development of a logistical plan:

Selecting a Date

- When does the legislature convene? When does it adjourn? What days of the week are the legislative bodies generally in session?
 - Legislative session calendars are available on state legislative websites. In most cases, there will be separate calendars for each chamber.
 - Chapters should hold an advocacy day when both chambers are in session.

Des Moines, IA



Finding Event Space

- Is there a space in the capitol typically used for events or information tables?
 - Information on capitol event space usually can be located on the legislature's or state capitol complex's website, including...
 1. Listing of event spaces, room diagrams, and availability.
 2. Event space rules, regulations, and costs.
 3. Electronic event space application.
 - As a last resort, chapters can call the House or Senate clerk's office for event space contact information.

Event Rules

- Are there ethics rules that would prohibit certain activities, such as providing food to legislators?
- Are there restrictions on poster board sizes or other materials?



2.2 Identifying Key Policy Issues

It is important to identify key issues to discuss with policy makers. Chapters should plan to discuss no more than three (3) issues, and importance should be placed on the licensure of landscape architects. Chapters must demonstrate the importance of state licensure and how landscape architecture projects protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public. Consideration of issues can also be given to those that both legislators and landscape architects care about: green infrastructure, sustainability, transportation, smart growth, stormwater management, etc.

Additional tips on identifying issues:

- If the chapter has a lobbyist, she/he can tell you which bills are active.
- Identify and [track pertinent legislation](#) on ASLA's website.
- Use [ASLA Public Policies](#) to inform your positions on issues.
- Any public stance taken by ASLA and its chapters must be consistent with ASLA Policies. If you are advocating for an issue outside ASLA's policies, please refer to our [Guide for Chapters Taking Policy Positions](#).

2.3 Handouts and Leave Behinds

Once you have identified issues, develop handouts and/or leave behinds to reinforce the policy(ies) during your legislative meetings.

- Create a simple talking point one-pager for advocates to use in their efforts to remain on message.
 - Emphasize why landscape architects support/oppose the issue at hand.
- Copies of "What is Architecture" and the "Licensure" factsheets, among others, are available to download and personalize from the ASLA website.
- ASLA National can contribute copies of Landscape Architecture Magazine upon [chapter request](#).
 - If you know of a recent issue of LAM highlighting a state project, feel free to ask for that specific copy. ASLA staff will make every effort to accommodate your request.

2.4 Meetings Scheduling & Preparation

There are several ways to schedule meetings depending on the participation size of your advocacy day. Choose the method that works best for your chapter.

1. Each participant schedules his/her own meetings.
2. The chapter lobbyist or advocacy day consultant schedules meetings on the chapter's behalf.
3. Designate someone from the chapter to schedule meetings.

Chapters who aren't as experienced have repeatedly endorsed the value of using a State Advocacy Day consultant or chapter lobbyist to coordinate meetings.

Tip: Be flexible - there will be times when a legislator is unable to make your appointment. Be prepared to meet with a staff person instead and proceed as you would have with the legislator.

Scheduling Guidelines

If advocates are scheduling their own meetings, chapters must provide clear instructions to participants about the scheduling process, including the date and purpose of your advocacy day, as well as where to find contact information for legislators.

- Provide a meeting-request template (email and/or phone script) for advocates to use.
 - A template/script ensures the chapter is uniform in its purpose and message for requesting meetings.
- Provide training on scheduling if necessary.
- Keep a central record of the meetings scheduled.
- Set deadlines to keep the process moving.

3.0 During Your Advocacy Day

To start the day, advocacy day organizers should conduct a brief meeting with all participants to review issues, talking points, and any late-breaking information (NOTE - If your chapter contracted with a lobbyist for advocacy day, this organizational meeting should be a required provision within the contract).

Additionally, you will want to provide a meeting report form to participants so that they can report back on legislator's response to the ask, follow-up requests, and additional information; such as, if they would be interested in a site tour.

Tip: Always provide introductory information about landscape architecture. You may or may not need to go into detail, depending on the legislator.



Albany, NY

3.1 Communicating Your Message

As your legislative meetings begin, remember that you are the expert. As design professionals, you are well equipped to demonstrate how landscape architecture projects, and the policies that impact them, provide important health, safety, and welfare benefits to the community. Incorporating the tips provided below coupled with issue talking points will help to develop a persuasive narrative to ensure that your legislative priorities are not only conveyed, but remembered.

Tell Your Legislator About Yourself

Do you live or work in their legislative district?

Communicate whether you live or work in their district, which is important to help establish a connection between you and the legislator and his/her staff.

Are you an employer in their legislative district? If you are an employer in their district, how many people do you employ?

This will help to establish a connection between you and the legislator and his/her staff. As an employer, you also provide important services to the district, including economic development, local jobs, revenue, and community development services.



Carson City, NV

Discuss Your Work

What projects are you and your colleagues working on? Bring project blueprints, construction documents and images of projects that relate to the legislative issues you are discussing. Before and after images of projects can be very persuasive! Bring newspaper clippings or printouts of online articles as evidence of the positive impacts landscape architecture has in the district.

What projects are needed in your district?

Landscape architects design and collaborate on a wide variety of projects integral to local, state, and national

development. Be prepared to describe projects in which landscape architects, and the programs that support the profession, play a pivotal role in improving the economic, structural, and environmental aspects of your community.

Be a Part of the Solution

Is there a problem facing your community and will proposed legislation address it?

Discuss the problem that is facing your local community or state by using supporting research and data, then demonstrate how the legislation addresses that problem.

How is landscape architecture a part of the solution?

Emphasize how landscape architecture is able to address the problem and community issues. Let the legislator know that you are available as a resource to help with issues in their district and across the state.

Making “The Ask”

Do you have a clear and specific “ask” for your state legislators?

Now that you have explained who you are, what you do, and some of the issues impacting your community, it’s time to focus on “the ask.”

While providing general information and educational background on landscape architecture is valuable, it is highly advisable to identify at least one specific action that you can “ask” of your state officials. Having a clear “ask” helps to focus the discussion and gives the legislator and staff something specific to consider.



Tip: The “ask” is the most important part of your meeting. Effective policy meetings must have a clear, concise, and specific “ask” that is associated with the chapter’s priority issues.

There are two types of asks - “legislative asks” or “relationship building asks.” Examples of the two types of asks include:

Legislative

- Request action on legislation, such as vote for HB 123, bring HB 123 up for a hearing, include amended language in HB 123, or co-sponsor HB 123.
- Write a letter to another member of the legislature or a state/federal agency or department. Legislators routinely write letters on behalf of constituents to inquire about and/or encourage/ discourage regulatory action.
- Sign onto a policy support letter.

Relationship Building

- Invite the legislator, agency official, or staff to visit a landscape architecture project in the district that ties to a key policy agenda item or to speak at an event/meeting. Legislators are interested in having a better understanding and seeing public projects in their districts.
- Invite the legislator, agency official, or staff to speak at an event or get a quote for an article.

If the meeting ends without an “ask” from you, the legislator and staff have little incentive to pursue the topic you discussed. The “ask” also gives you a reason to follow-up with the staffer at a later date - a way to stay in touch with the office and continue to build a relationship.

Keep these tips and tricks in mind to effectively communicate your message:

- Remain on message by sticking to the talking points prepared by the chapter.
- Use local examples to illustrate your points.
- Be prepared to have sound reasons to reinforce your position.

- Avoid jargon – she/he may not be familiar with the legislation or the landscape architecture profession.
- Never lie. It is ok to say you don't know the answer to their question, but you will be happy to follow-up with them afterwards.
- Keep the dialogue respectful, especially when you are unable to achieve the desired result or response from the legislator.
- Don't "preach" to the legislator - she/he may know more about an issue than you realize.

3.2 Promoting Your Advocacy Day

Utilize the chapter's and your personal social media to promote your State Advocacy Day. Develop a traditional and social media strategy to engage and inform the community about the advocacy day.

Take pictures and document your time at the state capitol in real time by tweeting or sharing photos, and/or take a traditional route and prepare press releases or Op-Eds (please see the Sample Public Outreach Timeline in the appendix for further information).

Tip: Try having quarterly correspondence with legislative offices. This shows intentionality from the chapter member as a resource.

Richmond, VA



4.0 After Your Advocacy Day

Advocacy efforts don't end once your meetings conclude. You've made your "ask" and offered to be a resource, laying the first pavers of your relationship foundation.

It is imperative to nurture these relationships in the months and years to come. The more chapter members are active in developing the contacts they made during State Advocacy Day, the higher likelihood a mutually beneficial relationship will be established.

Follow-up Action Items:

- Send a thank you letter to legislators and staff for meeting with you (see template in the appendix).
 - A thank you letter reinforces the issues discussed.
 - If applicable, don't forget to thank them for their support on issues of agreement.
- Use social media to promote the chapter's State Advocacy Day and to thank legislators for meeting with you.
- Remain in contact over any asks or unanswered questions.
 - Following-up on requests after two weeks is a good rule of thumb.
- Continue relationship building efforts, i.e. host a site tour, invitation to speak, be a resource, etc.

5.0 Appendix

5.1 Thank You Letter Template

[Date]

[Name of Public Official]

[Office Address]

[City, State, Zip]

Dear [NAME OF PUBLIC OFFICIAL]:

On behalf of the [NAME OF CHAPTER], I write to thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to meet with us during our [YEAR] State Advocacy Day.

During our meeting, we discussed the importance of landscape architecture licensure and legislation that affects landscape architects and our state's communities. We hope our discussion was instructive on the need for the continuation of landscape architecture licensing in [STATE]. It is imperative that the health, safety, and welfare of users and clients of public and private spaces be protected from real dangers (physical injury, property damage, and financial ruin) that can result from improperly designed environments.

We also spoke about [SUPPORTING/OPPOSING] [HOUSE/SENATE Bill #], [BILL TITLE]. This bill, sponsored by [NAME OF PUBLIC OFFICIAL], would ...

If you have any questions about the legislative issues we discussed, please feel free to contact [CHAPTER CONTACT] at [EMAIL] or [PHONE NUMBER].

Lastly, I would like to re-extend an offer to have [the NAME OF PUBLIC OFFICIAL] visit a local landscape architecture project. Our chapter would appreciate the opportunity

to demonstrate the importance of professional licensure and how our profession employs design and ingenuity to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public by transforming spaces into iconic community gems. Additionally, a site tour would showcase how vital local, state, and federal investments help our businesses and local community economies. Please feel free to contact me about coordinating a site visit should you have particular dates in mind.

I thank you again for your time and would welcome the opportunity to be a resource to you and your staff on issues important to our community.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[Chapter title]

[Name of chapter]

5.2 Sample Public Outreach Timeline

A successful public outreach campaign begins before State Advocacy Day arrives.

Two Weeks Out: Follow Up

- Make sure your press materials for advocacy day are drafted (if necessary), proofread, and ready for printing (if necessary). These can include: [Press releases](#), fact sheets, [Op-Ed pieces](#), etc.

One Week Out: Be Ready

- Be sure everyone on the planning committee understands your communications plan.
- Finalize your release and all press materials.
- Send reminders to participants via email.

- If an op-ed is part of your outreach plan, pitch it to members of the media. Be sure to check the submission guidelines, as these vary widely from outlet-to-outlet.

State Advocacy Day: Execute Final Plans

- Send your press release.
- Promote via social media.
- Take pictures!

After Advocacy Day: Let People Know It Happened

- Write an op-ed and send it to your local newspapers.
- Post about the advocacy day and its significance on your own blog and social media, or on your chapter's blog or social media.
- If your lawmakers are posting about it, share/like/follow those posts. Have your chapter, other chapter members, and friends do the same.
- If a member of the media publishes a story, post/link/share/like that as well - and have your chapter, National ASLA, and anyone else you know do the same.

5.3 Social Media Basics

Hashtags

Remember to use hashtags so ASLA National can follow along with your events, and to connect your social content to other State Advocacy Day events.

#StateAdvocacyDay

#ASLAadvocates

Pre-Event

- Depending on the type of State Advocacy Day your chapter conducts, you may want to publicize the event on social media to attract participants.

- Research the usernames/handles of any journalists (and their publications) or elected officials in attendance.

Day of Event

There are multiple social media platforms you can use during your State Advocacy Day event. Here are some options of how to use those platforms:

- Instagram: Use the stories feature to curate the advocacy day and allow your followers to see how your chapter is shaping policy in real time.
- Twitter: Live tweet any pictures or quotes from chapter members. Also use tweets to promote landscape architecture and highlight why a policy is important to the profession.

After the Event

- Facebook: Upload photos of the event to a Facebook Photo Album.
- Twitter: Send thank you Tweets to elected officials who met with your chapter.



5.4 Legislative Meeting Feedback Form Template

To download this form visit asla.org/LegislativeMeetingForm

Legislative Meeting Report State Advocacy Day



Advocate's name:

Staff member first and last name:

Public Official's office visited:

Staff member email address:

Met with Legislator/Public Official? YES NO

Staff member phone number:

Name of Bill #1

1. Did your public official or staff member express interest in "INSERT DESIRED ACTION" of Bill #1?

2. Did your public official or staff member have specific questions about Bill #1 that would require follow-up from the chapter? Please be specific.

Name of Bill #2

1. Did your public official or staff member express interest in "INSERT DESIRED ACTION" of Bill #2?

2. Did your public official or staff member have specific questions about Bill #2 that would require follow-up from the chapter? Please be specific.



ASLA

For more information email governmentaffairs@asla.org or visit asla.org.

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