



HOW TO ORGANIZE YOUTH TO PARTICIPATE IN NATIONAL LIBRARY LEGISLATIVE DAY

Do you want to get young people at your library to participate in National Library Legislative Day? Here are some tips to help you do just that!

1. Form an Harry Potter Alliance chapter at your library - here's how!

The Harry Potter Alliance Chapters Program serves as an access point for young people who are passionate about stories to become civically engaged and lead projects that improve their communities. Similarly, libraries are hubs of civic engagement whose teen and young adult programs represent safe spaces for young people to gather. The goals of the HPA Chapters Program align seamlessly with teen and young adult programs already in motion at libraries, and we think library staff are uniquely qualified to serve as advisors and mentors to student Chapter Organizers.

Starting an HPA chapter at your library is a partnership between your role as a mentor, the students' initiative to run their own projects, and our dedicated Chapters Staff to support both you and the young people along the way. Our vision for this program is that librarians will be most heavily involved in creating their chapters, planning the first few meetings, and identifying potential leaders among the young people in attendance. From there, the goal becomes to establish a young person as Chapter Organizer - or multiple strong leaders as joint Chapter Organizers - and to give chapter members the agency and opportunity to chart their own course. Once your chapter is up and running, your role will be to advise the chapter's young leaders and provide a space in which civic engagement projects can grow. Chapters are fun, rewarding, and completely free to start.

INTERESTED?

Start your own chapter at thehpalliance.org

QUESTIONS?

Send a virtual owl to our Chapters Staff at chapters@thehpalliance.org

2. Check out VLLD - here's how!

Virtual Library Legislative Day (VLLD) is part of the American Library Association's (ALA) [National Library Legislative Day](#), held each spring in Washington, D.C. This project will be an opportunity for all library advocates to make their voices heard on a national level by using the power of the Internet!

VLLD is held each spring and library advocates who cannot make it to Capitol Hill for the event can be a part of the effort by calling, emailing, and/or tweeting their elected officials during that period!

You might be asking yourself, "**Why would young people care?**" Remember, young people want to help! At the HPA, young people made 3,000 phone calls for marriage equality, donated over 300,000 books to libraries and literacy organizations worldwide, organized over 20,000 Youtube video creators and fans to advocate for net neutrality, and contributed over 8,000 actions to VLLD 2016. VLLD makes Washington advocacy available to anyone, but you and the HPA can bring the inspiration and excitement.

For more info, visit <http://www.ala.org/united/advocacy/virtuallegday>

3. Work with your group to decide what issues you want to work on - here's how!

Because National Library Legislative Day happens in May, we won't know which issues ALA will be focusing on until closer to the event - but we have some ideas. In previous years, they have worked on:

- Sustaining or increasing funding for school and public libraries
- Increased opportunities for tech centers at libraries
- Making academic journals open to the public through the library system
- Digital privacy and PATRIOT Act Reform
- Copyright issues

As you see, there are endless possibilities - but some of them sound kind of complicated! One thing that the HPA does is help to make inaccessible or seemingly "boring" issues more accessible to young, creative audiences. We know that sometimes these issues are hard to talk about, but here are some tips to help you get the message across!

1. Talk to your community first! Take action!

By having an HPA Chapter in your library, you have a unique access point to the youth in your community. Talk with your chapter members about why they love libraries, and how they feel about issues like access, copyright, and technology. Then, encourage them to help you reach out to their peers to get a complete picture of the diversity of viewpoints and experiences among your community's youth. This is a great way to not only help you target your activities, but to help your chapter members to take a leadership role in the community.

2. Bring stories to life!

We know that getting people interested in an abstract theme can be challenging - that's why we use the power of storytelling to help. Start by working with your chapter to think about your favorite stories and any parallels between those stories and real-life issues. For example, if the Hogwarts' library had its funding cut, then Hermione, Harry and Ron would never have discovered the Sorcerer's Stone or the basilisk hiding in the pipes. If you need help with this, don't worry! Chapters have access to a huge collection of resources and volunteers ready to help you brainstorm one-on-one.

3. Do you have the "online factor"?

A great way to engage young people is through social media. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat are great ways to reach a wider audience and spread your message! Try working with your chapter members to create fun and informative posts about NLLD for your library's for social media!

4. Take action!

Get the community involved! Have your chapter/young library users come up with a series of IRL (in real life) activities to complement your online advocacy! Here are some ideas:

- **Organize a "Call Center"** - Why not dedicate a day during VLLD to call your local Representatives? This is an easy way to help that only takes a couple of minutes. Provide your chapter and other library patrons with all the information and materials they need to advocate. This can be as simple as using the library computers to send emails and promote the action on their social media. Doing this as a group can also make it seem less intimidating!
- **Make a Video** - Work with your chapter to collect short clips of patrons telling their Representative how the library makes a difference in their lives. Share the video on social media so your community can see the work you are doing, and tweet or email it to your local Representative. Make sure to tag it #NLLD17!
- **Organize a Letter Writing Social** - Set a time and place where anyone can come join your chapter to write handwritten notes. You can provide all of the information and materials they need, and the social aspect makes it a nice time to chat with other local activists. Pro tip: free food is a great way to encourage people.
- **Host a Story Hour** - Work with your chapter to host a special National Library Legislative Day story hour! Read books about

libraries and literacy like *We Are In a Book* by Mo Willems or *A Library Book for Bear* by Bonny Becker. Engage even your youngest patrons in NLLD by asking them to draw a picture of what they like most about the library. Parents, teens and other patrons can join in by drawing or writing about how the library has impacted their lives and your community. Gather the drawings and narratives together and send them to your Representative along with a letter from your chapter and library board reaffirming the importance of sustainable funding for libraries.

- **Host a Library Trivia Contest** - Help the community learn more about everything a library has to offer by hosting a trivia night dedicated to the history of libraries and the vast array of services your library offers.
- **Host a Book Drive** - Conveniently, the HPA's Accio Books campaign begins about a month before NLLD. Your chapter can collect books to send to an official site, or for your own library! As books are collected, you'll have the opportunity to talk about the issues libraries are facing.

4. Write to Your Reps

There are several methods your chapter can use to contact your Representatives to let them know more about the issues you are advocating for. Share these steps with all the young people in your community and encourage them to do it!

The first step is finding out who your Members of Congress are. Visit www.contactingthecongress.org and enter your address to get their names and contact information!

Social Media

Using social media to contact your reps is great because it is public, so you'll be spreading the message not only to your Representatives but also among people in general! To do this just find your Representatives' social media accounts - it will be fairly easy since you know their names already - and mention them in your posts!

A sample post might look like:



"Today we're advocating for increased funding for libraries! Join us by sharing why you love the library using #NLLD17!"



"Without the Hogwarts library, Harry, Ron and Hermione would never have found the Sorcerer's Stone, much less survived through all seven books! Join our HPA chapter at 6pm today as we celebrate our favorite fictional libraries and write letters to support real-life libraries for National Library Legislative Day!"

Email or Letter

The first step in contacting lawmakers is to find their addresses and emails. To do this, visit the "find your elected officials" section at <http://cqrcengage.com/ala/home>. You can also check out www.ala.org/advocacy/advocacy-university and ilovelibraries.org to get tips on writing to elected officials!

Handwritten Letters vs. Emails

Ten personal emails and/or handwritten letters can have more of an impact than 50 copies of the same letter template. The message - "support libraries!" - can be the same, but elected officials are more likely to respond when letters or emails are in your own voice. Plus, having many unique voices helps draw more attention to your issue!

Phone

Just like personalized letters, a quick phone call can have a big impact!

When you call your Senator or Representative's office, you'll speak to a member of their staff. These staff members make notes on how many calls they receive. Issues that get a lot of calls are brought to the attention of the Senator or Representative, so every call counts!

It can be a little intimidating to make these calls, so remind your members:

- Phone calls are one of the most effective ways to demonstrate that you care about libraries.
- It can be intimidating to make the call, but it's very short (usually under 1 minute).
- Even if you can't vote, your Members of Congress are there to represent you, so it's important to tell them what you think.
- Check out the sample script below - feel free to use it as is, adapt it, or speak from the heart!

Hi, my name is _____ and I am a constituent living in Senator/Representative _____'s district. [Note: You may be asked to provide your zip code or address to verify that you are a constituent.]

*I am calling to support the librarians who will be visiting your office on May 2nd. I want to urge Senator/Representative _____ to pass **[add issues here]**.*

I am a library patron and member of a nonprofit called "The Harry Potter Alliance," which uses the power of stories to create real-world change. Libraries are essential to our members, as well as many other people in our community. Senator/Representative _____ must use their leadership to ensure that our public libraries are well-funded and able to meet the needs of our changing world.

Thank you for taking the time to share my concerns with Senator/Representative _____.

Beyond National Library Legislative Day

National Library Legislative Day happens once a year, but we know that library advocacy happens every day. Here are some ideas to keep your advocacy momentum going throughout the year:

Host Your Representative for a Tour – Contact your Representative's local office and invite them to visit with your chapter next time they are in your city. Ask them to take part in a story hour, teen book club meeting, or any other program you are excited about. Many Representatives are not aware of the services that libraries offer or the number of patrons you engage on a day-to-day basis – getting them in the door to hear your patrons' narratives and see the work you do can have a major impact.

Host an Advocacy 101 Workshop - Library patrons can be your strongest advocates. Help your patrons support the library by hosting an Advocacy 101 workshop to introduce them to a variety of ways they can get involved in advocacy and engage their elected officials and other policy makers. Consider hosting a special youth advocacy workshop and use our HPA resources to see how we "turn fans into heroes".

Take Part in Other HPA Campaigns - Each year, the HPA leads campaigns around a variety of issues like literacy, civic engagement, LGBTQIA+ rights, economic inequality, and more! Visit thehpalliance.org to learn more about how to start a chapter and bring these great activities to your library!

We're super excited for VLLD and NLLD this year, and we hope you are too! We're looking forward to seeing all of the awesome things you and your chapter do for the event!

