10 Ways You Can Advocate for Your Library and CLC

1. **Get informed.** Visit [CLC’s advocacy page](#). Visit the [CTPlaces Coalition](#) and [CLA’s advocacy page](#). All of these sites have information about the key budget issues facing CLC, the State Library, Connecticut libraries, and our museum, historical and humanities partners. CLC will be creating updated webpages with info graphics and talking points very soon.

2. **Stay informed on key bills and budget news.** Register at [CTPlaces Coalition](#) and [CLA](#) to receive up to date information on the status of bills, calls to action and steps you can take to speak up about CLC and library issues in our state. The [Connecticut Mirror](#) and [CT News Junkie](#) both cover our state government and issues in detail, and send a daily update if you register with their sites.

3. **Identify your legislators for your work and home addresses.** Research a bit about them so you know where they stand on issues, what their background is, what they are passionate about, and what you might have in common. Legislators are most influenced by folks who are in their district, whether they work or live there. Get to know their staff as well.

4. **Send a New Year or congratulations message to your legislators.** As the Alliance for CT Nonprofits notes: “This is a great time of year to contact your local legislators and invite them to visit your [libraries] and to meet your staff. While the legislative session began on January 4th, legislators are generally available in their districts until the Governor’s budget is released and subsequent budget hearings are scheduled (mid-February). Establishing a relationship with your local legislators is critical to the development of public policy helping community nonprofits [libraries].” There are sample letters at [CTPlaces](#) and [CTNonprofit Alliance](#).

5. **Increase the effectiveness of your message by following these tips:**
   a. Be sure to personalize the message.
   b. Handwritten notes are best, but communicate in the way you feel most comfortable.
   c. Make sure that you identify yourself as a constituent in the note and in the return address (work/home).
   d. Make it easy for them to visit you by offering to schedule the visit at their convenience. You don’t really need a special event or date – your library has something unique and valuable going on every day of the week.
   e. Follow up with a phone call to their office and invite their staff as well.
   f. Don’t view this as a “one-time” invitation. Consider it a “first date” or just one of many steps towards building a relationship with them and their staff.
   g. It may be tempting to try to schedule all of your legislators to visit at one time - this is very difficult to ensure, so be flexible about accommodating each legislator’s schedule.
   h. Give them a good photo opportunity. They love getting good press and being a part of a happy story or successful event. Bring on your kids, therapy dogs, happy citizens, cool technology or fun activities!
   i. Invite CLC to attend your events. We would love to spend more time with you and to meet your legislators. We can provide up to date savings figures, help you create your compelling story, and be your biggest fan in the room!
6. **Create a compelling story about your organization’s value** in terms that are meaningful to your legislators, town leaders and your community. How does your library or CLC solve problems in your community? What tangible value do you provide? Pull together data and facts that demonstrate the ways you save money, the impact of your work on social or community issues, the results of your service to underserved populations, and the outcomes of your partnerships in terms of efficiencies or greater gains. Further develop your case by defining how you are different from other groups seeking funding or support in your community or statewide. Demonstrate that you are part of both current and future solutions. Talk about future issues or needs your library can help with. Remember, **even if we don’t get funding now, libraries need to be recognized and at the table when discussions about long-term solutions and programs take place.**

7. **Use real life examples.** Bring facts or issues to life with stories about people your library helped, ways resources and programs were used by community members, and real happy endings.

8. **Add the phrase “And the Connecticut Library Consortium (CLC) helps us do this by .” to all of your advocacy messages.** Seriously, CLC needs help letting folks know we exist and what we do. We have a brand issue and really, really need your help. Think about what your budget, purchasing power, programs & services might be like if CLC no longer existed.

9. **Speak out about statewide library issues.** Once the legislative session gets going, there will be budget hearings to testify at, calls to action from CTPlaces and CLA, letters to send, calls to make, emails to distribute, and op-eds to write. **This is the year to do one more thing and get out of your comfort zone!** Here are some tools to help you:
   a. [Email or write your legislators](#)
   b. [Call your legislators](#)
   c. [Meet with Legislator (and/or staff)](#)
   d. [Write an Op-Ed or Letter to the Editor](#)
   e. [Testify at Public Hearings](#)

10. **Recognize your legislators and supporters for the efforts they’ve made.** Even if you don’t get the requested funding or legislation passed, make sure you give thanks to those who met with you, listened to you, and acted upon your behalf.