



VSBA

Virginia School Boards Association

Government Relations

Take Your Legislator to School Month November 2023



VSBA Take Your Legislator to School Month

November 2023

November is VSBA Take Your Legislator to School Month

Building a closer relationship between public education and lawmakers serving in the Virginia General Assembly is essential to the well-being of our students. The Virginia School Boards Association urges each school division in the state to invite at least one of their state legislators to visit their schools during the month of November.

The benefits of participating in the *VSBA Take Your Legislator to School Month* provide opportunities for developing closer relationships between school divisions, local communities, and our elected officials. A successful legislative visit can spur further dialogue providing education and political leaders the platform to work together to ensure that we provide the best possible education for our students.

What Types of Activities Can We Implement?

There are a variety of activities that your division can do when hosting legislators. These include luncheons/breakfasts, speaking to civics classes, reading to younger students, discussing the Virginia legislative process, etc. The precise format for each visit should be discussed between the division or school and the legislator, but we recommend each visit include a tour of school facilities conducted by a board member or other division representatives. Use this opportunity to raise awareness of division successes, showcase a program that a legislator helped fund, or highlight division needs that have gone unmet.

Promote & Celebrate Your Visit

- After you have issued your invitation and planned the visit, distribute a media alert (sample enclosed) and invite the media to cover the virtual visit.
- Take pictures/video and include a story about the meeting in your division newsletter, as well as on division social media accounts, and the division website. If your division has a school-based media class/club with student reporters, this is a good way to involve students in providing news coverage that can be used by the division in promoting the meeting.
- Have participating students send handwritten thank you letters to the legislator.
- Notify the VSBA of your activities. We may attend your events or promote them in the VSBA Daily News and social media feeds. Please send photos to communications@vsba.org and use hashtag #VALeg2school when posting to social media.

VSBA Take Your Legislator to School Month November 2023

We hope you will take advantage of this opportunity to strengthen the already solid bond between public education and the Virginia General Assembly. These activities will aid VSBA as it lobbies on your behalf on education issues. Thank you for all that you do as a leader, advocate, and supporter of public education. If you have any questions, please contact VSBA Director of Legislative Services, J.T. Kessler, at jason@vsba.org or (434) 295-8722.

Participation in VSBA initiatives and observances is optional. School boards in Virginia have the discretion on whether to participate locally. Any related materials from the Association are shared as suggested ideas for implementation for any board that may choose to do so.



Quick Tips & Suggestions

- Discuss what your division or school would like to get out of a virtual visit by a state legislator and phrase your invitation accordingly.
- Thank the legislator for their past support for public education.
- Help the legislator decide which activities and topics would be appropriate for specific age groups. Legislators may have received some suggestions from the clerks, but school staff might help them plan others.
- Be sensitive to the fact that every school and division has at least two representatives in the legislature, a senator and delegate. School divisions may have multiple senators and delegates serving in the legislature.
- Invite each of your legislators. While some may not respond to your invitation, others might feel slighted at not receiving one.
- Obtain the legislator's biography from his or her office or website for use in introductions and news releases.
- Be alert to promising opportunities for photos. Sometimes that alone will be enough to attract newspaper or TV media coverage.
- Use Hashtag #VALeg2school when posting on social media.
- Apprise the VSBA of your activities, past and planned, to help us promote this event this year and in future years.
- VSBA Take Your Legislator to School Month should be just one part of ongoing year-round communication that takes place between your division and members of the Virginia General Assembly.

Have Questions?

Contact VSBA Director of Legislative Services, J.T. Kessler, at jason@vsba.org or 434-295-8722.



Sample Invitation Letter

Dear Delegate/Senator _____:

On behalf of the school board of _____, we would like to invite you to visit our schools as part of *VSBA Take Your Legislator to School Month*, which is being observed in November.

Coordinated by the Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA), the goal of *Take Your Legislator to School Month* is to build a stronger relationship between schools and legislators. The event gives legislators an opportunity to observe what is going on in Virginia schools, and provides Virginia's students the opportunity to meet and interact with an elected official.

There are many exciting and innovative things happening each day in _____ schools, and several members of our school board would like to provide you an update on our progress. Our teachers are implementing new, research-based instructional strategies, and our students are using a variety of new technology methods such as _____. We are open to your ideas on how to make this time with your young constituents most productive.

We plan to invite the local media to attend your visit, which we think communicates the high degree of interest that state and local leaders have in public education.

If your schedule permits you to accept this invitation, please contact us at _____ with some dates and times and we can discuss the details of your visit.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Cordially,

School Board Chair

Division Superintendent

Sample Media Alert

Media Alert

For Immediate Release

Senator/Delegate <INSERT NAME> to Visit <INSERT SCHOOL NAME> for VSBA Take Your Legislator to School Month

Who: Senator/Delegate <INSERT NAME>, School Board Chair <INSERT NAME>, Superintendent <INSERT NAME>, <INSERT OTHER KEY PARTICIPANTS>

What: As part of VSBA Take Your Legislator to School Month, Senator/Delegate <INSERT NAME> will be visiting <INSERT SCHOOL NAME> to lead discussions and conduct other activities designed to show students how the democratic process works and to heighten awareness of citizen rights and responsibilities.

Why: November is VSBA Take Your Legislator to School Month. It was created by the Virginia School Boards Association to build stronger relationships between public education and the Virginia General Assembly. VSBA Take Your Legislator to School Month gives legislators an opportunity to observe what is going on in Virginia schools, and provides Virginia's students the chance to meet and interact with an elected official.

When: <INSERT DATE AND TIME; IF THERE IS A SPECIFIC SCHEDULE, INSERT HERE>

<TIME> Arrival

<TIME> Tour of school

<TIME> Facilities or visit to

<TIME> Delegate/Senator Departure

Where: <INSERT LOCATION>

Contact: <INSERT SCHOOL DIVISION CONTACT>

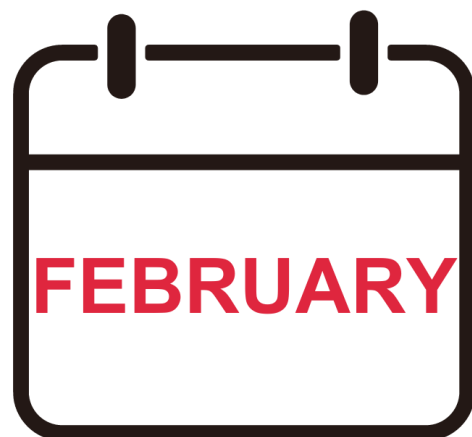
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Advocacy is Year-Round!



- Virginia General Assembly Legislative Session begins on the second Wednesday of the month.
- Attend VSBA Capital Conference.
- Hold meetings with local delegation on Capitol Square.
- Respond to VSBA Legislative Action Alerts.
- Review VSBA Legislative Update Blog.
- Attend weekly virtual legislative updates on Friday afternoons during session.

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- Attend weekly virtual legislative updates on Friday afternoons during session.
- Connect with local legislative delegation urging support for VSBA Legislative Priorities.
- Review VSBA Legislative Update Blog.



- Respond to VSBA Legislative Action Alerts.
- Review End-of-Session report from VSBA Government Relations Staff.
- VSBA solicits proposed new and amended legislative positions from local school boards for consideration by the Legislative Positions Committee in July.
- Conduct End-of-Session meetings with local legislative delegation.
- Attend local VSBA Regional Meeting.





- Virginia General Assembly returns for Reconvened Session to consider amendments to legislation by the Governor.
- Attend local VSBA Regional Meeting.

- Invite local legislative delegation to attend end-of-the-year special events.
- Highlight student and school division success stories and share with local legislative delegation.
- VSBA solicits nominations for the annual Advocate for Education Award from local school boards with final Friday in July as the submission deadline.



- Attend VSBA School Law Conference.
- Proposed new or amended legislative positions from local school boards for consideration by the Legislative Positions Committee due on the first Monday of June.
- Invite local legislative delegation to attend commencement ceremonies.
- Submit names of Delegate and Alternate Delegate to attend the VSBA Delegate Assembly in November.



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- Highlight student and school division success stories and share with local legislative delegation.
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- Invite local legislative delegation to Back-to-School events.
- Begin planning November Take Your Legislator to School Month activities and send Save-the-Date notices to local legislative delegation.

- Attend VSBA Legislative Advocacy Conference.



- Adopt local legislative priorities to be shared with local legislative delegation during November Take Your Legislator to School Month activities.

- Participate in VSBA Take Your Legislator to School Month activities.
- Attend the VSBA Annual Convention.
- Delegates from each school division represent their board at the VSBA Delegate Assembly.



- Review VSBA Legislative Positions Handbook and Legislative Priorities.
- Continue meeting with local legislative delegation prior to beginning of January legislative season.

Legislative Advocacy Resources

Below are links to important resources that will assist with your advocacy efforts.

[Virginia School Boards Association Legislative Update Blog](#)

[Virginia General Assembly](#)

[The Senate of Virginia](#)

[The Virginia House of Delegates](#)

[Who's My Legislator?](#)

[Virginia's Legislative Information System](#)

[Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission](#)

[Code of Virginia](#)

[Virginia Department of Education](#)



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