



LOCAL NETWORK

HISTORICAL ORGANIZATIONS OF NORTH DAKOTA

ARE YOU A MUSEUM ADVOCATE?

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The last week of February 2014 marked the sixth year of Museum Advocacy Day, organized and sponsored by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM). This represents an organized effort to get museums from all over the country to meet with their elected officials, discuss key issues, and urge support for funding. Museums are allowed to both lobby and advocate for their organizations, as long as they follow the rules for each activity. While lobbying may not be the route for every organization, some tips are provided in the following pages to help you become a better advocate for the organizations we so passionately support.

In order to help us better understand these rules and activities, the AAM has developed a guide specifically to help

promote these museum advocacy activities. This handy guide, *Speak Up for Museums: The AAM Guide to Advocacy*, was authored by Gail Ravnitzky Silberglied, herself a capitol hill staffer with more than a decade of advocacy experience.

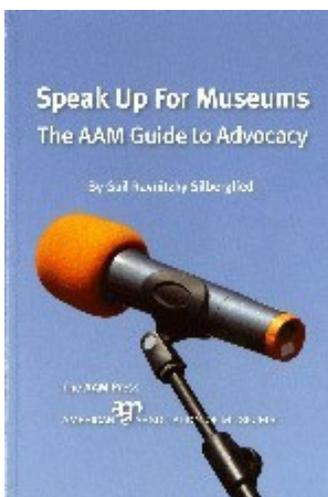
The guide specifically outlines how advocates can find and meet their elected officials, promote the key issues museum organizations are concerned about, and garner support for museum funding.

Every year, during the last week of February, the AAM and its wide network of member institutions and individuals meet in Washington, D.C., to follow through on their own advice for meeting with elected representatives. The mission is to build support for museums and

related organizations. However, AAM recognizes that it isn't feasible for all organizations to undertake the expensive travel necessary to make these in-person visits. This book and the corresponding advocacy section of the AAM website helps arm-chair advocates understand how they can do this from their respective locations.

It is time for us all to become better museum advocates. The advocacy section of the AAM website can be found here:

www.aam-us.org/advocacy. The printed guide can be borrowed from the field service lending library at history.nd.gov/fieldServices.html, or by contacting Danielle Stuckle at 701-328-2794 or dlstuckle@nd.gov.



What's Your Elevator Speech?

Have an elevator speech prepared that conveys the value of your organization in two minutes or less, and share your speech at every opportunity. This includes talking to city and county commissioners, school board members, state and congressional senators and

representatives, as well as your current and potential donors.

When crafting your elevator speech, think about why someone from outside your organization would care about the work you do. What is the benefit to them? Have you made it easy for people to get

involved in the work you do? Leave people wanting to know more. Provide a couple key points, but don't overshare. Leave them curious and wanting more information.

Most importantly, have a call to action. Make it clear in your pitch what your organization needs and wants from people.



Developing a Publicity Toolkit

Make the most of your advocacy efforts by developing a publicity toolkit.



Whether you are traveling to Capitol Hill, the state capitol in Bismarck, or advocating from home, there is a whole arsenal of tools to advocate for and publicize the work your organization accomplishes.

Coordinate with others from your organization and other local historical societies, museums, and related groups. Pool your time, energy, and other resources to highlight your credibility as history and museum advocates.

Write a letter to the editor or a press release. Try developing a media pitch, an op-ed, a public service announcement (PSA), or a radio pitch. This can help your local media better understand how they can take your suggested story ideas and adapt them to better suit their own editorial approach. PSAs have the added benefit of posting to YouTube, your website, and other social media outlets.

Unless you decide to develop any of these ideas into a full-fledged advertising campaign,

these methods have the added benefit of being free publicity that can be used widely in your region. They could help lead to wider recognition if coordinated with other organizations.

Your local library, the bookstore, and the Internet are full of templates to help guide the development of these different types of publicity. Once you develop a few key pieces, you'll have a valuable toolkit that will serve your organization for many years.

Meeting with Elected Officials: A "How To" Guide

Lend your voice to the efforts urging support for museums and related organizations from our elected officials:

1. Know who represents you.
2. Send a congratulatory note to newly elected officials introducing them to your organization.
3. Send an invitation to legislators requesting a meeting. Do you want to go to their office, meet at your museum, or attend one of their events? Be flexible, accommodate their schedule, and consider your options.
4. Follow up on any letters or e-mails you send or phone calls you make.
5. Remember that meeting with staff can be just as effective as meeting with the official. Staff serve as gate keepers with a lot of influence and can be good allies to have in your advocacy efforts.
6. Always be polite and respectful. Today's intern could be tomorrow's key staff person.
7. Follow news and issues on the American Alliance of Museum's website at www.aam-us.org/



advocacy

8. Tell them your stories! Make sure they know how special you are . Know your elevator speech well. Do you have some engaging stories of how your organization benefits the people currently living in your community.
9. Does your work dovetail with professional or personal interests of your elected officials?
10. Take pictures, and share the details of your meeting through social media.
11. Stay on their radar. Share information about successes and challenges, and engage them in future events.

Don't assume that your elected officials are familiar with your organization, your successes, issues, or challenges.

Advocate from Anywhere

You don't have to go to the nation's capitol to advocate for museums:

- Take action. Contact elected officials to express your concerns and urge support of museums

and related organizations.

- Ask elected officials to meet locally. Invite them to your site.
- Maximize your efforts by working

with similar organizations in your community.

- Use social media and e-mail to help spread your message.



State Historical Society of North Dakota

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The mission of the State Historical Society of North Dakota is to identify, preserve, interpret, and promote the heritage of North Dakota and its people.

We're on the web at:

history.nd.gov     

History for everyone.



**STATE
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY
OF NORTH DAKOTA**

The Educational Programs and Outreach Coordinator provides outreach and field services to museums, historical societies, and related organizations throughout North Dakota. To learn more about the outreach and field service program, visit history.nd.gov/FieldServices.html or contact Danielle Stuckle at 701-328-2794 or dlstuckle@nd.gov.

Did You Know?



- Museums spend more than \$2 billion a year on education; the typical museum devotes three-quarters of its education budget to K-12 students.
- Museums directly contribute \$21 billion to the U.S. economy each year. They generate billions more through indirect spending by their visitors.
- The nonprofit arts and culture industry annually generates over \$135 billion in economic activity, supports more than 4.1 million full-time jobs, and returns over \$22 billion in local, state, and federal tax revenues.
- Governments that support the arts see an average return on investment of over \$7 in taxes for every \$1 that the government appropriates.
- Of all US leisure travelers, 78 percent participate in cultural or heritage activities. These travelers—including visitors to museums—spend 63 percent more on average than other leisure travelers.
- At least 22 percent of museums are located in rural areas. Their programs bring education and access to their materials to their communities in a variety of ways.

[Data from the American Alliance of Museums]