

TO: A-Teams and Other Interested Parties
FROM: Lance Walter
DATE: January 15, 2013
RE: Some Helpful Information for Planning a Day at the Capitol

Rehabilitation for Wisconsin in Action (RFWiA) will be organizing a day of action at the State Capitol in March. A-Teams from across the state and other supporters will all join together for a coordinated day of activities aimed at raising the visibility of the organizations and making clear our positions on important issues being discussed in the legislature.

Making this day a success for all involved will require a bit of planning and a good turnout from around the state. Since most of the A-Teams are newly formed this memo is designed to help people prepare for the event, while bringing some focus for the next couple of your A-Team activities.

If you have questions please email or call me, I am happy to help!

The Legislature – A very brief background

The Wisconsin Legislature is made up of 33 State Senators and 99 State Representatives. All 99 of the representatives are elected every two years. State Senators serve four-year terms, with one half of the members standing for election every two years.

Each Senate District is made up of three Assembly (Representatives) Districts.

Currently, the both the Senate and the Assembly are controlled by the Republicans. In the Assembly the Republicans have 59 Representatives and the Democrats have 39 (there is currently one open seat where a special election will be held soon and a Republican will win). In the State Senate there are 18 Republicans and 15 Democrats.

The leader of the majority party in each house has broad powers including:

- Deciding what committees will exist
- Deciding the number of people and political make-up of each committee
- Appointing chairs of each committee
- Approving membership on committees
- Overseeing what bills are referred to which committee
- Deciding when the body as a whole will convene to do business
- Deciding what issues the body will be able to discuss when it convenes discussion

In the Assembly the leader is called The Speaker of the Assembly. This position is held by Representative Robin Vos (R-Burlington). In the Senate the position is called the Majority Leader and is held by Senator Scott Fitzgerald (R – Juneau).

Each member of the legislature serves on one or more committees that focus on certain issue areas. Members of the Republican Party chair all committees and have a majority of members from their party on all committees.

How the Legislative Process Works – in Brief

Proposals to make changes to the state laws can be introduced by any member of the legislature. Once a concept has been drafted into a written proposal it becomes known as a Bill. Each Bill is given a number based on the order in which it is introduced beginning each session with Bill 1. Bills introduced by a member of the Assembly are referred to as Assembly Bills (AB for short) and Bill introduced by members of the Senate are called Senate Bills (SB). Each house begins its numbering at 1 each session, so the first bill introduced in the Senate is called SB 1 (in the Assembly it is AB 1).

The person who introduces the bill is called the author or sponsor of the bill. Generally members of the legislature circulate their ideas among their colleges and try to get other people to sign onto their bills as co-sponsors. The purpose of this is that it show the bill has broader support. Most Bills have sponsors in both houses of the legislature, but it is not a requirement. The Author of the Bill is always the member who is listed first after the words “Introduced by” on the top of any Bill.

In order for a Bill to become law it must get the approval of both houses of the legislature and be signed by the governor. While the process can take many shapes, most bills follow the steps below, with Assembly Bills beginning the process in the Assembly and Senate Bills starting in the senate:

- 1) Bill is introduced and given a number
- 2) Bill is assigned to a Committee
- 3) Committee holds a hearing on the Bill (if Chair of the committee want to)
- 4) Committee votes on the Bill (if Chair of the Committee wants to)
- 5) Bill is sent to the Rules/Organization Committee making it available to be scheduled for a vote of the Assembly or Senate, if this committee decides to do so (generally the decision of the leader of each house)
- 6) Bill is voted on by the Assembly or Senate
- 7) Bill then repeats stems 2-6 in the other house of the legislature
- 8) Bill is sent to the Governor
- 9) Governor Signs Bill into law or vetoes (kills) the Bill

While there are many procedural ways to alter this general process, for most bills if they do not win a majority vote at any stage they are dead. As you also can see the Leadership in each house and the Chairs of committees also have the power to stop a bill’s progress by simply refusing to take action.

Most Bills that are introduced do not become law. In the last Session of the legislature 1,391 Bills were introduced and only 286 of them became law. In Wisconsin there is only one Bill each year that must pass, the State Budget, which unlike other Bills is introduced by The Governor.

The Governor - A few Key Points.

The Governor of Wisconsin heads the state's Executive Branch. As noted above he has the final say in whether a Bill becomes a law, but he also has many other powers. Most of state Government, with the exception of the Legislature and the Judiciary, works for the Governor. Seventeen different agencies are considered departments. Health Services and Workforce Development are two of the departments that you may likely have contact with in your daily operations.

Each Department is headed by a Secretary appointed by the Governor. These positions make up the Governor's Cabinet and are empowered to hire administrators to run specific divisions. These groups then break into bureaus headed by directors, then sections headed by chiefs and even smaller units headed by supervisors.

While these agencies cannot make laws, they are often given the power to create, modify and examine the specific rules used to implement laws and often their decisions have significant effects on the people they regulate. Additionally, members of these agencies are experts in the areas they oversee and are used as resources by the governor in creating new policy and direction as the Governor formulates the state budget and works to implement his vision for the state.

What will A-Teams do on our Day at the Capitol?

The goal is to meet with all of your area legislators, introduce yourselves (and the A-Team!), talk to them about some key issues and help them understand why these things are important by telling them your stories.

We make an even greater impression when we can visit with a lot of different legislators all in one day, which is why we are having this event to bring people from around the state to the Capitol all on the same day.

Plus we will have knowledgeable people on hand that day to help you have a fun and successful day! We will create a final agenda in the weeks ahead, but for planning purposes let's use this for now:

Date: TBA - Soon

10:00 – Arrive at State Capitol (we will reserve a room for us all to meet up in.)

10:30 – 11:00 – Briefing/Update on Issues and answer any questions

11:00 – 2:00 – Meet with Legislators

2:00 – 3:00 – Gather for a snack and to share how things went with other A-Teams

3:00 - Depart for home.

What should we do to get ready?

Recruit people to attend:

This is the first real A-Team event for most of you, so make an effort to get a good turnout. While CRP staff members may be helpful in organizing the event with you we want legislators to hear from those most affected by the programs we want to preserve. We need clients, parents/guardians, family members and business partners.

Also think about the legislators in your area. Can you get one or two people to come who live in each district? You should meet with all of the members of the Assembly and Senate that represent areas served by your local CRP. This will likely mean 1-2 Senators and 3-5 members of the Assembly.

You may want to make a flyer that you can hand out so people can sign up once we set the date.

Identify your legislators:

If you do not know who your State Senator and State Representative are there is an easy way to find out. Simply go to <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/Pages/waml.aspx> , enter your address and it will tell you who represents you. Once this information is displayed you can connect to their individual web pages with a click of the mouse. On those pages you will find information on how to contact them, what committees they serve on and even some useful biographical information.

If you would like to see an interactive map of the Assembly Districts click here:

<http://www.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?webmap=dd1181129623438590456e2386ca516b>

Senate Districts: http://legis.wisconsin.gov/ltsb/redistricting/PDFs/Senate_letter_Act43.pdf

Take a little time to review their websites and talk about each one as a group. Chances are someone in your A-Team will know them. It always helps to know a few things about people before you meet with them. The best conversations begin with common ground and a little small talk.

Think about transportation:

Get a plan together on how you will all get to Madison. Can you use a bus? Who will drive? What happens if 35 people want to go (that would be awesome by the way!)? Make a plan.

Create a One Page handout about your A-Team

You will want to make sure that you can leave behind a sheet at each meeting that lets folks know who you are, so they don't forget. Additionally, this exercise will help you develop a consistent way that you describe yourselves. Make sure you include:

- Who You Are (Your A-Team Name)
- What you care about and why
- How people can reach you in the future if they have questions

Also feel free to bring any other material that might educate legislators or staff on the programs or facilities you care about.

Schedule Meetings with the Legislators:

The best way to set up an appointment is to call the office of the elected official. All of them have toll free numbers; so feel free to use them.

A staff member will answer the phone. Tell them your name and that you are involved with the RFWiA Legislative Day, where you are from and ask to speak to the person who handles the Senator/Representative's schedule.

Tell them that you are going to be in Madison on (Insert Date Here) with the A-Team, a group of local concerned advocates, and are interested in meeting with the Senator or Representative if they are in town. Try to schedule the appointment for between 11:00 and 2:00. Fifteen minutes will probably be enough, but you may want to allow extra time as sometimes people in politics love to talk.

Some legislators may not be in town that day. It is absolutely OK to meet with a staff member. Capital staffers advise their bosses on just about everything and are good people to get to know.

Make an appointment to meet with the legislators who represent the area where you live and the location of the CRP and other clients they serve. The idea is to meet with as many people as it is logical to do, as long as you have come all the way to Madison.

A word about office staff and politicians:

People often assume that State Senators and Representatives have large staff and are difficult to approach, well the opposite is generally true. Most state representatives have no more than two staff people and Senators no more than four. Remember, politicians want everyone to like them (they do need to be re-elected) so expect a warm welcome.

Go Over the Talking Points on the Issues:

Since the event is still a couple of months away we do not yet have updated talking points on the issues we want to discuss. By the time of the event the State Budget will have been introduced and that will likely mean a new list of potential concerns. It is possible that our previous (Action Alert of Dec 2012) efforts could result in the Budget containing some of the items below, or we could still be asking that they be added to the budget. In any case please make sure that you are familiar with the following two issues that were the focus of our last Action Alert.

Updated Talking points will be distributed as soon as possible and RFWiA will be prepared with appropriate talking points and handouts that can be left with legislators on the day of the event. These will be distributed at the 10:30 Issue Briefing.

Develop some personal stories:

At your meetings you will want to explain who you are, what an A-Team is, what are the key issues of the day, but the MOST important thing you can do is to make clear why the programs you use, the facilities you have and the CRP that serves you is important to you! How does it make you feel? What would life be like without it? What does it mean to have a job, a purpose, friends...

Identify people who can tell their story and work with them so that they are comfortable doing it. Bring pictures if that helps, have parents/guardians work together with clients to tell the story if needed, but be prepared to share. If you want to write it down, so you can leave your story with the people you visit even better (make sure you include a picture – they really do tell 1000 words.)

Think about how you will organize your meetings:

It is always a good idea to have a plan for what you will do at the meeting. Perhaps you will even have to divide up into two groups if you have meetings at the same time. In any case there are roles for everyone to play. Get as many people involved as possible. Here is a suggestion for a way to organize the meeting, but feel free to modify it as you wish.

Have someone be the meeting leader. They don't do all the talking, but they make sure that you don't get sidetracked and miss out on what you want to convey. This person can begin the meeting, explain the A-Team and keep it on the agenda:

Suggested Meeting Agenda:

- Introductions – Briefly who you are , how you are connected to the CRP, where you live, what services are important (you can insert a story during this time if you like)
- Discuss the Issues (maybe a different person for each issue) – Ask how they feel about these issues and if you can count on their support
- Let me tell you how some of these things affect real people – a or two story here
- Invite them to visit your facility
- Leave them some handouts and ask that they take a further look at your issues and let them know their position so you can report back to the A-Team members who could not attend
- Thank them for their time, ask for a picture with them

Follow-up

Two things to do after you complete your meetings.

- 1) Report back to RFWiA about what you learned at your meetings. Lobby efforts are ongoing and it is important to convey anything you learned at the meetings. Spend a few minutes and write up a summary of the meetings and drop an email to Thomas Cook at tcook@rfw.org
- 2) Send each legislator a brief note/card – thanking them for taking the time to meet. Be sure to include any information you might have agreed to provide, extend the invitation to visit you at the CRP and make sure you include a contact name and address for the A-Team (not a staff person of the CRP)