



FAQs
A New Approach for Advocacy at New York Library Association
Legislative Session 2021-2022

For many years, legislative priorities were identified and examined by the members of the Legislative Committee. Once a consensus was achieved, an agenda was advanced to the Council for approval on an annual basis.

Membership would advocate for the approved agenda throughout the year by means of online engagement, written and spoken action and NYLA's Annual Library Advocacy Day at the Capitol.

As we enter the 2021-2022 Legislative Session, NYLA and its membership have an incredible opportunity before it. The industry continues to evolve and as such, so do our needs. In January 2021, the New York State Capitol will welcome a new cohort of representatives. From seasoned veterans to eager freshman, the views and issues of our elected officials have never been more diverse. It is time for libraries to be given the spotlight and for the State to recognize who we are – the community.

How will the new approach differ from how NYLA has historically approached advocacy?

For the 2021-2022 session, all state legislation will be reviewed and tracked upon introduction and throughout its "life-cycle". Pertinent bills will be categorized and tracked by NYLA's Director of Government Relations & Advocacy. If it is determined that the library community will be significantly impacted by a piece of legislation, the bill and its contents will be provided to the Legislative Committee and a decision will be made as to whether any supporting or opposing documentation will be distributed on NYLA's behalf and if membership engagement will be sought.

What are the benefits of the new approach?

With a limited number of priorities in the past to discuss with our state senators and assembly members, the audience too was limited. Funding, as an anomaly, most Council-approved bills were placed on the Education Committee. As a result, the Members assigned to the above committee had the most exposure to library community.

The new approach will provide us with opportunities to be far more proactive. Issues that directly impact the library community are vast, as are the committees to which the related legislation will be assigned. This wider distribution will mean increased exposure with our

representatives and will give us more opportunities to speak about the complexities of the library community and advocate for desired change.

How many priorities does NYLA typically have?

Over the last five years, the Association has had an average of 3 priorities: funding (general) and legislation-specific (i.e., S2421/A2444).

What are the categories that will be tracked?

COVID-Specific
Elections
Funding
HR & Internal Operations
Information Privacy & Censorship
Infrastructure
Patron (Community) Interaction
Pre-Kindergarten – 12th
Professional Standards & Regulations
Publishing & Content Distribution
Taxes & Exemptions

Does the new approach mean dozens of priorities?

The short answer, no.

Action taken by NYLA in the form of memorandums, letters or other advocacy is simply that, action. Throughout the year, there will be pieces of legislation or issues that will take precedence. This could be a result of the Legislature, societal-events, partnerships, or activities (i.e., mini advocacy days).

How does NYLA decide what category legislation is assigned?

Most pieces of legislation could be assigned to multiple categories however, it is the responsibility of the DoGRA to place the bill into the “best-fitting” file in the database.

It is the act of tracking the legislation that is vital. The category in which a specific bill is assigned, while important, will not change the process or future action.

How will my role as a Library Champion change next year?

As much or as little as you like.

There will be more opportunities to engage with NYLA, your community, and your representatives (state and federal). While NYLA will continue to distribute Take Action campaigns, we will also be doing smaller, segmented efforts (public, school, academic). These may include electronic engagement, in-person efforts or virtual events.