

Advocating For Your School

with the Wisconsin Council of Religious & Independent Schools

Wisconsin Council
of Religious & Independent Schools
Committed to a Higher Standard

One of the most powerful tools that WCRIS has in its tool chest for legislative relations is your involvement through our Advocacy Portal. The Advocacy Portal allows WCRIS members to engage with legislators with a few clicks of a button.

The purpose of the tool is to not only contact legislators, but to ensure that the message and position of our members is concise and unified.

A major success for the portal was its activation during the 2017-19 legislative session. Work at private schools was not recognized towards lifetime teacher licensure. That was an issue for many of our hardworking educators. Other advocates gave up because they cut their own deals with lawmakers and said we could fix it “later,” which actually meant waiting 18 months because of the legislative calendar. Although they knew that, they didn’t think it was important.

WCRIS found that unacceptable. With only days left before the bill went for a vote and the session ended, WCRIS activated its portal. **You sent over 3,000 letters to legislators.** This wave of emails got the gears moving and private school teaching was counted towards lifetime teacher licensure. Lawmakers were begging to be added to the list of supporters. Some even asked after the law passed! (They can do that).

We activate the portal only when it’s vital, and we’re convinced it will be effective. We won’t worry you or waste your time showboating. If we activate the portal for every bill that goes through the legislature, it would, overtime, become less effective. The portal is easy to use and does not require any login credentials. It is funded by your membership dues.

When we ask for your help via your Superintendent, WCRIS Board Representative, or our Current Events weekly e-letter, here are the steps to access the WCRIS Advocacy Portal:

1. Go to www.wcris.org/public-policy/.
2. Select the appropriate legislator for your school. If you do not know who your legislator is, you can go to <https://maps.legis.wisconsin.gov/>. Search using your school’s address.
3. Select the appropriate government official. Sometimes WCRIS will also use the portal to contact the Governor’s office or target other department heads.
4. Fill in your information. This is important for legislators to know so make sure it is accurate.
5. Write your message. Describe your school and enrollment. Make sure to include any important information that would be impactful to the WCRIS position. Please be respectful.
6. Submit your form.

If you have any questions or run into technical issues, please contact the WCRIS office at: (608) 287-1224 or wcris.staff@wcris.org.

Learn More >

While the Advocacy Portal is one way WCRIS advocates for you, there is also another way you can advocate for your school. One of the best ways to advocate for your school is to create a good relationship with your legislator.

We encourage you to **invite your legislators to your school** and encourage them to conduct a lesson on government. Many legislators are thrilled to visit schools and host Q&A sessions with students.

When you invite legislators to your school, please keep the conversation about issues impacting your school and avoid other non-school related policy discussions. For example, talk about the impact of PFAS on your school's well, but avoid talking about DNR hunting regulations.

Here are some topics that you could talk about with your legislator:

- Student/staff and school building safety;
- Student transportation;
- Your relationship with the local public school district;
- Teacher licensure and shortages;
- PFAS/PFOS water regulations (only if you are on private well water);
- The importance of religious freedom to your mission and values;
- School choice programs;
- Internet and broadband access;
- Topics related to the day-to-day operation of your school.

If you do decide to have a legislator visit your school, please tell WCRIS. We use this information when we meet with legislators and may even follow-up with them after their visit.

You can contact our office if you need help about what to discuss with your legislator.

Finally, share any photos of the legislator at your school with WCRIS. We may feature your school in a newsletter or annual update.

If you have any questions about how the portal works, how to contact legislators, or how you can advocate for your school, please contact our office and our staff will be happy to help. We are here to serve!



Current action items will be posted on our website.

Check out our Advocacy Portal by scanning the QR code!

Subscribe to our weekly Current Events E-letter at www.wcris.org/news/