

WSPTA Advocacy Overview

Advocacy vs. Lobbying – What’s the difference?

Advocacy is the act of speaking for, in support of, or on behalf of others. Lobbying is attempting to influence a politician or office holder on a policy or bill. PTAs can do both of these activities within IRS limits.

Our Founder: Washington State PTA was founded in April 1905 by Abby Williams Hill of Tacoma. She was an artist who saw a need for an organization to support Washington’s children. Thanks to Abby’s leadership and vision – and that of thousands of parents and teachers who have carried her vision forward – Washington State PTA has been a leading voice for children and families in the state ever since.



Who advocates? Of course, we all do! But do you know about the WSPTA committees driving the advocacy at the state and national level? We have three, and if you are interested in joining any of them, please [click here to find out more](#) about the committees, and fill out the [volunteer interest form](#).

- Advocacy Committee
- Resolutions Committee
- Federal Legislative Committee

Looking for more advocacy resources? [Click here](#) for links to some great information and resources you can use to educate yourself and become an effective advocate.

2026 Legislative Session:

Action Alerts During the Washington state legislative session, WSPTA will send action alerts to members who have signed up to help. These actions alerts only take a couple of minutes to complete and send and have a message you can easily customize to send emails to your legislators. It’s an easy and effective way to amplify WSPTA’s advocacy and focus on our legislative issues. [Sign up](#)

The 2026 short session of the Washington State Legislature begins on Monday, January 12, 2026 and is scheduled to last 60 days.

Read more about the schedule and proposed bills here:

[Legislature Home \(wa.gov\)](#)

WSPTA Legislative Consultant



Marie Sullivan is Legislative Consultant who has been representing WSPTA since 2015. The thing she enjoys most is helping WSPTA members feel successful, through training, testifying or advocating at a local or state level. She is most proud of ensuring that the WSPTA member voice is at the right tables to advance its legislative platform and mission. That includes being asked to share the WSPTA agenda at state-level events.

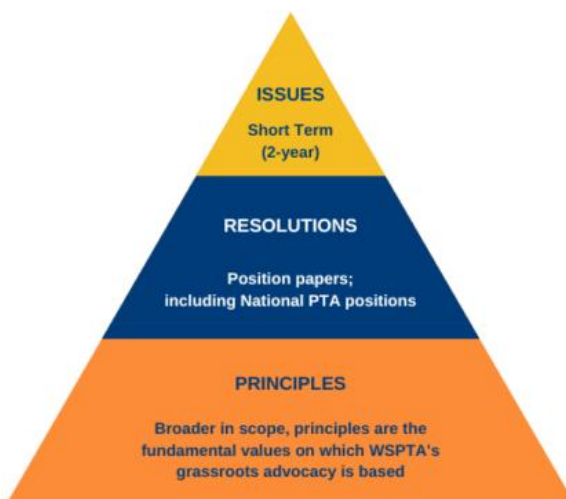
At the conclusion of the Washington state legislative session Marie provides an overview and analysis of the progress made on WSPTA legislative priorities. [Click here](#) to read Marie's synopsis of the 2025 Legislative Session.

Another way to review WSPTA's successes in the 2025 legislative session is to check out the [WSPTA 2025 Legislative Session Scorecard](#).



WSPTA Advocacy Positions

WSPTA positions include issues, principles and resolutions, which are voted on by our membership.



- **Legislative issues** make up our legislative platform, which is a short-term, two-year platform made up of the top five issues and also supported issues. The top five are the primary focus when advocating throughout the year.
- **Resolutions** are specific, long-term positions that guide the advocacy work from the local level to the state level. They are typically broader in scope than legislative issues.
- **Legislative principles** are long-term and consist of five overarching categories. Principles fill the gaps in the short-term issues platform so that members can advocate on emerging issues.

Advocacy Looking Forward...

Advocacy Resources: Looking for help to improve your advocacy efforts? Don't recreate the wheel! A great way to start is to look at the [WSPTA Focus on Advocacy](#) page, which includes information on upcoming events.

WSPTA has a wide variety of trainings and resources to help you including an advocacy handbook, Votes to Endorse/Support Ballot Measures: Steps for Local PTAs and Councils, a candidate forum toolkit, and more! Check out the [leadership guides](#) and [advocacy resources](#) sections of the WSPTA website to see all available resources. Check with your council or region director for advocacy training.

NOVEMBER 15 is the deadline to submit resolutions for consideration at WSPTA's Convention and annual meeting. Convention will be held May 15-17, 2026 at the Doubletree by Hilton Seattle Airport. Click here for the resolution [submission form](#).



Top 5 Legislative Priorities for 2025-2026

CLOSING THE FUNDING GAPS

ADDRESSING THE STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

ADDRESSING FUNDING, INCLUSION, AND SUPPORTS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

PREVENTING AND REDUCING GUN VIOLENCE AND SUICIDE

EXPANDING SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION FUNDING OPTIONS

Also Supported Legislative Priorities

INCREASING EDUCATIONAL EQUITY BY CLOSING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

MITIGATING THE ADVERSE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

WSPTA 2025 Advocacy Award Winners

2025 Friend of Children Award: Senator Lisa Wellman

The Friend of Children Award recognizes an individual or organization for state-level dedication to all children through service aligned with WSPTA's vision and mission.

Sen. Wellman, is a tireless advocate for children, continuing to look at how to improve the current system and make sure that parents and students have access and funding to the best public school system possible.

Sen. Wellman has been a staunch ally for Washington's children, ensuring investments in early learning, stability in K-12 funding, and encouraging affordable access to higher education. She has taken her early roots in teaching and translated them into a passion for student success. Her contributions include ground-breaking work in career-connected learning and competency-based learning. As a former executive in the technology industry, Senator Wellman is committed to providing all students with access to computer science courses to fill the various tech jobs offered across the state.

Sen. Wellman has been a friend to WSPTA since arriving in the State Senate in 2017, working closely with the organization on legislation and making herself available throughout the year to meet with members, advocates, and leadership.

2025 Friend of Children Award: Be SMART for Kids Washington

For those of you unfamiliar with the Be SMART campaign, it was launched to raise awareness that secure gun storage—storing guns unloaded, locked, and separate from ammunition—can save children's lives. Be SMART emphasizes that it's an adult responsibility to keep kids from accessing guns, and that every adult can play a role in keeping kids and communities safer.

This non-partisan, non-political approach engages both gun owners and non-gun owners in working together to make our communities safer. And this work, like PTA, is volunteer-driven. In Washington, Be SMART volunteers have spent countless hours tabling at community events like Washington State PTA Convention and Legislative Assembly, providing free information sessions to PTAs and other groups to help convey these lifesaving messages, normalize conversations around gun storage, and provide PTA leaders with the tools they need to share this message with others in their community.

2025 Outstanding Advocate Award: Natayla Yudkovsky

The Outstanding Advocate Award recognizes an individual for their statewide advocacy and commitment in helping to create strong policies relating to the health, welfare, safety and education of children and youth.

Natalya is an amazing advocate because she is smart, compassionate, and great at keeping calm and gracefully navigating highly charged issues and environments. She mentors people and shares the thought process and best practices behind her actions which builds bridges and empowers new advocates.

On the advocacy committee, Natalya has a keen ability to review bills, see different perspectives, and articulate why PTA should support important pieces of legislation. She is a fierce advocate for graduation credits and pathways, but does not just focus on a single issue. She is willing to dig in and do the research to help craft Washington State PTA issues and resolutions. When we need a person to testify, look no further. She can be asked to testify on nearly any topic and provide a thoughtful perspective on how students would be impacted.

It is also important to spotlight how Natalya consistently and passionately speaks up when she feels there is not a perspective being heard or she sees something that is not right. She often uses her voice for those who cannot be in the room and whose voices cannot be heard.

WSPTA is thankful to Natalya for being a passionate advocate on behalf of all children of Washington!

2025 Outstanding Student Advocate Award: Taanvi Arekapudi

The Outstanding Student Advocate Award recognizes a student for statewide advocacy, leadership and/or service on behalf of all children and youth.

Taanvi has been advocating for years and has advanced to become an author, keynote speaker, and mental health advocate. Her mission is to help kids and teens “embrace their uniqueness, harnessing their strength, and realizing their worth, no matter what society says...to shatter the mental health stigma.”

Taanvi Arekapudi is an international bestselling author of “Uplift Teens Today” (the first teen-to-teen mental health book), creator of the Emotion Cards Deck, and founder of the award-winning, revolutionary 24/7 platform, Nexus: Mental Health Hub for Schools. Nexus has impacted over 800k individuals, with a goal to reach over 80 million students nationwide.

WSPTA thanks Taanvi for her tireless advocacy for kids and teens!

WSPTA 2025 Awards of Excellence: Advocacy

The purpose of this award is to promote advocacy at local PTAs, community PTAs, and councils by recognizing programs, projects, and activities/events that increase awareness of and participation in advocacy issues at the school, local community, council, region, state, and national levels. What does advocacy mean to your local PTA or council?

Congratulations to the 2025 Gold Level Winners!

Bellevue Council PTA - Worked together with their community to create a town hall around funding gaps in education. This town hall event originated from conversations between the Bellevue school board directors and Bellevue PTSA Council. They heard that education associations and school district leaders in Shoreline, Northshore and Edmonds did a joint town hall in October that was very well attended. Bellevue Council PTSA wanted to host a town hall for the five Eastside school district communities as they all have a vested interest in closing the funding gap. The town hall had over 700 people attend the event from the Eastside, including legislators, students, district administrators, school board members, parents, and community members!

Everett Council PTA - The voter registration drive was initiated to educate and encourage eligible high school students about the importance of voting and civic engagement. Recognizing the need to empower students to use their voices in the democratic process, the goal was to organize an event before the voter registration deadline for the November 2024 elections. The Everett PTSA Council Advocacy and FACE chairs collaborated with the Snohomish County Voter Office, Mill Creek YMCA Youth and Government students from Jackson High School, and local PTSA leaders to coordinate this event. The drive aimed to serve all Jackson High School and Everett High School students aged 16 or older who were not yet registered to vote, providing them with an opportunity to register or pre-register and learn about the importance of civic participation.

Let's celebrate your PTA at next year's Legislative Assembly! Let us know about the amazing advocacy work in your communities by applying for the Awards of Excellence Advocacy award. Learn how to apply [here](#).