

# VOLUNTEER IOWA DAY AT THE CAPITOL



## 2024 Toolkit

Date: Thursday, February 1

Iowa State Capitol, Des Moines, Iowa

Meeting Location: Capitol Rotunda, 11:00am-1:00pm

Thank you for registering to participate in Volunteer Iowa Day at the Capitol, hosted by Volunteer Iowa and Iowa MENTOR.

This toolkit outlines preparation for the Day at the Capitol as well as instructions for the day of the event. While it should answer any questions, you may have about the event, please feel free to contact us at [info@volunteerioda.org](mailto:info@volunteerioda.org) or [mentor@volunteerioda.org](mailto:mentor@volunteerioda.org), or by phone at 1-800-308-5987.

We hope that your participation in the Day at the Capitol will help us to:

- Highlight the importance of service & volunteering in Iowa
- Build legislators' awareness of policy issues important for supporting our sector
- Provide the opportunity for volunteer & national service programs to connect with their local legislators

## Preparation for Volunteer Iowa Day at the Capitol 2024

### 1. Register to Participate

Please register [here](#) by January 27, 2024. **EACH ATTENDEE SHOULD REGISTER INDIVIDUALLY.**

### 2. Review the January 17<sup>th</sup> Training Webinar

Click the link to watch the [webinar recording](#). The webinar provides details about Volunteer Iowa's policy priorities for the current state legislative session. It also gives tips for talking to legislators and reminders about the differences between educating elected officials (which ALL of our partners and programs can do) and lobbying policymakers (which SOME staff, board members, and program alumni can do).

### 3. Invite your legislators

As a program affiliated with Volunteer Iowa it is **essential for you contact legislators BEFORE the Day at the Capitol to make arrangements to meet with them on February 1st**. They are very interested in hearing from their constituents and count on someone like you to be the expert to inform them about a subject matter. Legislators tend to be responsive to personal invitations from programs in their region, so make sure to mention that you are a constituent. We encourage you to make yourself available throughout the day to ensure they can select the time that works best for them to speak with you.

The best way to initiate contact with local legislators is to create a formal, yet personal, letter of invitation to be sent via email. Click the link for a [sample email invitation for programs and commissioners](#).

*Not sure which legislators to contact?*

Visit <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislators/find> to search for the names, contact information, and photos of your local legislators. If your program covers multiple legislative districts, we encourage you to prioritize meetings with any legislators who serve on key committees related to Volunteer Iowa priorities. Click the link for [a list of relevant committees and their members](#).

*Follow up after the initial invitation*

If you sent an invitation to your legislators already, follow up via e-mail or telephone to remind them of the upcoming event. It is also helpful to ask volunteers, board members, and other supporters to write personal notes to local legislators encouraging them to meet with you during the Volunteer Iowa Day at the Capitol and to learn more about the impact of volunteerism and service in local communities.

### 4. Prepare to speak with your legislators

Develop a one-minute elevator speech about your program and how it connects to Volunteer Iowa and our [2024 state priorities and impact handout](#) ([click here for our non-lobbying version](#)). Our [2023-2024 Programs Map](#) will also help you identify other Volunteer Iowa programs that serve your legislator's district. Because the schedules of your legislators will vary, some legislators may only be able to spend a few minutes speaking with you during our day at the Capitol. Practice the speech, but don't memorize to the point that it becomes flat. Make sure your passion is the focus; you're an expert in your field not only because you know facts and stories, but also because you believe passionately in the work that you

do. Do your research well enough that you discuss your program and its impact knowledgeably and passionately, without relying on memorized soundbites.

If a legislator asks a question you don't have an answer to, tell them you will follow up. Then actually follow up later. Review the "Tips for Speaking with Legislators" that are provided in this handbook.

5. Watch your e-mail inbox for additional information

We will send additional information and updates, as needed, to the registered attendees via the email addresses provided. But, if further questions or comments arise, please do not hesitate to contact us at [info@volunteeriowa.org](mailto:info@volunteeriowa.org) or [mentor@volunteeriowa.org](mailto:mentor@volunteeriowa.org) or by phone: 1-800-308-5987.

6. Prepare for social media

Prepare to take some photos with your legislator and with fellow advocates during the Day at the Capitol. Consider bringing a camera, or make sure your phone is fully charged. Keep in mind that social media can be a powerful tool when used as a platform for promoting a cause. Use it to your advantage. Be sure to incorporate some time into your day for a quick photo and have a few sample text posts on hand that promote your cause and draw attention to your legislator and to your organization. See our [Social Media guide](#) for sample texts and images.

## Day of Event: Details and Tips

*Overview of the Day:* Volunteer Iowa Day at the Capitol will take place on Thursday, February 1, at the Iowa State Capitol in Des Moines. Volunteer Iowa staff will be on hand from 11:00am-1:00pm, but you are encouraged to meet with your legislators at any time during the day that is mutually convenient.

- All day: Meet with your legislators at a time that is mutually convenient
- 11:00am-1:00pm: Volunteer Iowa commissioners & staff available to check you in and connect you with other attendees who plan to meet with the same legislators (South Capitol Rotunda)
- Disperse throughout the Capitol to connect with your legislators, then stop back to our table in the South Capitol Rotunda to let us know how things went. Commissioners and staff will be available until 1:00pm to answer your questions, help you find the legislative chambers, check meeting schedules, or provide whatever other assistance you may need.
- Complete an [after-action report](#) so we know who you met with and how the meeting went.
- Post a thank you on social media, sharing information about your program and tagging the legislators and Volunteer Iowa in your post. Click the link to access our [social media guide and graphics](#).

Be sure to take pictures with your legislators to share on social media, both during and after the event. If you meet with legislators in the morning and are unable to stay until the afternoon, you can provide feedback to us on your meetings through the evaluation we'll distribute by email following the event. Check the Volunteer Iowa website for a video overview of the day: [Day at the Capitol \(youtube.com\)](#)

## Arrival at the State Capitol

**Parking:** Please use one of the visitor parking lots which are clearly marked around the Capitol Complex. Persons with disabilities may be dropped off at the ground floor/West entrance. A parking map is available at: [Parking Information | Iowa Department of Administrative Services](#).

**Capitol Entrances:** Visitors must use the ground floor entrances that are located on the West or South side of the Capitol. Entrances are not available on the North side of the building. All persons and packages are subject to search. No weapons, explosives, balloons, candles, or cooking devices are allowed, and electronic items may receive additional screenings. Identification may be requested.

**Volunteer Iowa Meeting Location:** Capitol Rotunda (south) from 11:00am-1:00pm

Our registration table will be located in the South Capitol Rotunda with a sign identifying our Day at the Capitol. Please stop by to register your attendance. However, you may schedule legislative meetings anytime throughout the day that is convenient to you and your legislator. After holding your meetings, please stop back at our table to report back to us on how your meetings went.

**Not Able to Attend?** If you are unable to attend the day at the Capitol, we hope you will still communicate with your legislator about your service program and the Volunteer Iowa legislative priorities. If there is inclement weather on the date of the event and you are unable to attend, please e-mail or call your legislators and follow up with them at a later date.

## Meeting with Your Legislators

The House and Senate are located on the second floor of the Capitol. If you do not have a previously scheduled appointment and meeting location, you should use the following procedure to call a Senator or Representative out of the legislative chambers for meetings:

- 1) Go to the main door of the appropriate chamber located on 2nd floor of the Capitol. The Senate chamber is on the south side of the Rotunda and the House chamber is on the north side.
- 2) Fill out a message slip (see examples below) and hand to the doorman. He/she (or a page) will deliver the message slip to the legislator. Walk back down the chamber steps and wait in the Rotunda near the chamber. (Be sure to check the area where you will be waiting on the Senate message slip).
- 3) If available, your legislator will come out and call your name. If the legislator cannot talk with you at that time, a page will alert you that he/she is not currently available. If your legislator is not in the chamber, leave your materials with the doorman.
- 4) Photos of legislators are available at <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislators/find>.

### Tips for Speaking with Legislators

**Do** identify yourself and who you represent

**Do** be brief; legislators are busy

**Do** be specific and practical. Relate your work to situations in the legislator's home district

**Do** consider yourself a potential consultant to legislators.

**Do** share via email a *one-page* flyer or brochure

**Do** keep a positive attitude and remember that your legislators are genuinely interested in the thoughts of their constituents

**Do** thank legislators for their time

THE SENATE	HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
DATE: _____ TIME: _____	Seat number: _____
ROOM: _____	Representative: _____
EAT NO: _____	Check if Appropriate
.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Or Clerk
MESSAGE:	_____
.....	(Name)
.....	Of: _____
_____ is at	(Town, Company or Organization and Phone)
the rear of the chamber and requests to see you:	<u>Select One</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> in the lounge <input type="checkbox"/> at the door	<input type="checkbox"/> Is waiting to see you
	<input type="checkbox"/> Has Attached Literature
	<input type="checkbox"/> Has Left Message
	(Write Message on Back)
	Date: _____ Time: _____
	Front Door

## Talking

### Points/Script for Meeting with Legislators *IN PERSON OR VIRTUAL*

- 1) Introduce yourself/your group
  - a. Your name(s)
  - b. Your agency/program name
  - c. Where your agency/program is located and what areas you serve
  
- 2) Explain why you are here - to participate in Volunteer Iowa Day at the Capitol
  - a. Give the legislator a copy of the Volunteer Iowa Day at the Capitol handout
  - b. Share how your agency is connected to Volunteer Iowa and/or Iowa MENTOR
  - c. Explain how the 2024 Volunteer Iowa legislative priorities relate to your work (printed on the handout and next page of this toolkit).
  
- 3) Share a story and data about your agency/program
  - a. The best way to connect with a legislator is often a personal story that connects to the policy issues being discussed.
  - b. Legislators may also want to know about the impact of your agency/program in terms of numbers served, cost savings, etc. (If you do not have the data they seek, ask if you can investigate and get back to them later). You can also share data on Volunteer Iowa's overall impact as noted in our [2024 state priorities and impact handout \(click here for our non-lobbying version\)](#)
  
- 4) Seek their support & get a clear answer
  - a. Ask the legislators if they are supportive of the Volunteer Iowa priorities you have discussed

- b. If you cannot lobby, do not make an ask related to specific legislation or funding requests. (But you can still ask the legislator's general stance towards your program)
- 5) Say thank you
- a. Remember to always be polite even if they disagree with you
  - b. Be respectful of the legislators' time; remember they may have many other meetings and appointments
  - c. If you are meeting via video conference, ask if you can take a photo and then share it on social media with a thank you message, and be sure to tag them in the post.
  - d. At the conclusion of your meeting, thank them and follow-up later with a letter or e-mail

## Volunteer Iowa 2024 Legislative Priorities

### AmeriCorps Seniors Priorities (including RSVP)

- **Legislative Priority:** Provide sufficient state funding to maintain support for all federally-awarded Iowa programs (\$418,698). Annual RSVP state funding is awarded in the Health and Human Services (HHS) appropriations subcommittee (transfer from Dept. on Aging Appropriation).
- **Impact:** In 2022-2023, over 3,800 RSVP volunteers served Iowa communities, contributing over 222,000 hours to support community needs such as disaster relief, financial literacy, and food security, at a value of \$5.8 million.

### AmeriCorps Priorities (including AmeriCorps VISTA, AmeriCorps State, AmeriCorps NCCC)

#### AmeriCorps Tax Burden

- **Legislative Priority:** Exempt the AmeriCorps living allowance from state income tax.
- **Impact:** AmeriCorps members have a tremendous impact, both directly and by leveraging additional volunteers (5,103 in 2021-2022), yet their compensation is little over the poverty level. Removing the income tax burden would help recruit and retain high-quality members. Tax proposals will be considered by the Ways and Means committees.

#### Iowa National Service Corps

- **Legislative Priority:** Dedicate funding towards expanding the Iowa Reading Corps and/or formalize role of master coaching with AEAs and maintain appropriation for RefugeeRise AmeriCorps.
- **Impact:** The Iowa Reading Corps program has been shown to help struggling students' progress at 1.5 to 2 times the target rate. Funding and institutional efficiency would help expand the Reading Corps to rural areas. It is the currently the most cost-effective intervention.

### Iowa MENTOR (Iowa Mentoring Partnership) Priorities

- **Legislative Priority:** Maintain annual funding awarded for program grants in the Health and Human Services appropriations subcommittee (with Iowa Department of Public Health appropriation).

**Impact:** State funding supports grants to certified mentoring programs to connect young people with supportive adult relationships and provide specific substance abuse prevention training. Mentoring is an effective evidence-based prevention and intervention strategy with positive effects on school attendance and achievement, mental health support, violence prevention, and workforce development.

## Follow Up

*Send a Thank You:* Don't make attendance at the Day at the Capitol the last contact you have with your legislators, make it the beginning! Start by sending a thank you for their time and ask for other ways that you can work with them. For example, consider inviting legislators to upcoming events at your organization or adding them to your newsletter distribution list.

*Follow the legislative session:* Use the resources available on the Iowa Legislature's website to see what happens with bills of interest to you over the course of the session.

- Senate/House chambers information: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/chambers>
- Legislation information: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation>

*Alert local media that you participated Volunteer Iowa/Iowa MENTOR Day at the Capitol:* Many news outlets are happy to share information about a local organization's participation in Volunteer Iowa's Day at the Capitol. You can find local newspaper contacts at: [www.inanews.com](http://www.inanews.com) while radio and television contacts are available at: [www.iowabroadcasters.com](http://www.iowabroadcasters.com).

*Complete the after-action report:* Let us know what went well and what didn't and tell us more about your conversations with elected officials. The report is found at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/JJNPHH3>.