



Wisconsin Parents Association Newsletter

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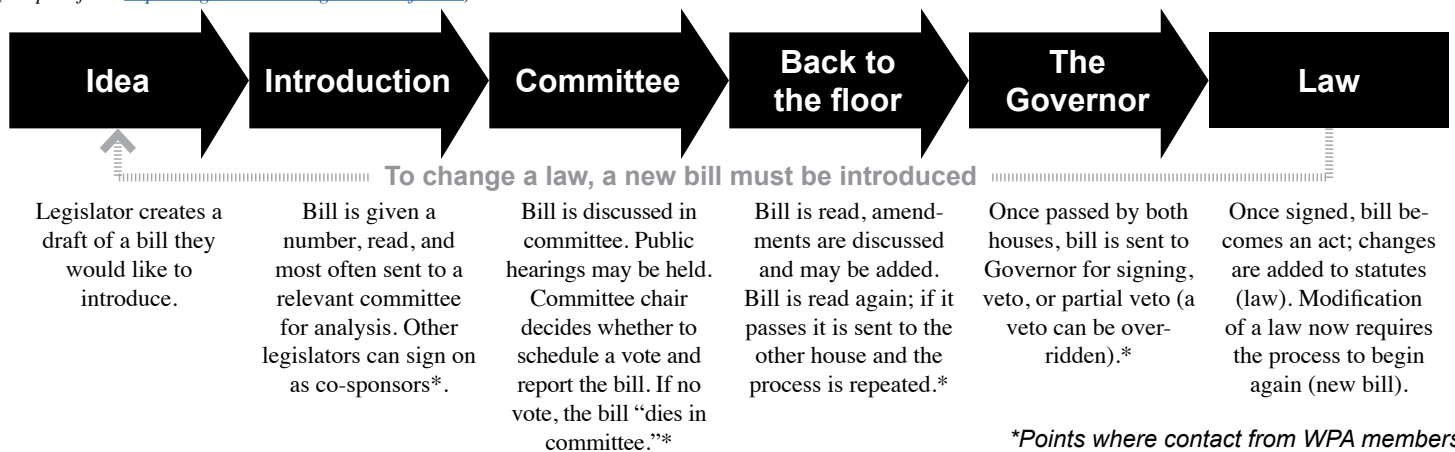
Legislative Watch

In June 2016, the WPA Board approved the creation of a Legislative Watch Committee, headed by our Issues Director. The LWC keeps up-to-date on state and national issues that may affect Wisconsin homeschool law. They watch, analyze, and call on members when action is needed. Interested? Email Pamela Roland at pamelaroland@homeschooling-wpa.org.

So, how does a bill become a law in this state? How can we all cultivate relationships with our representatives to make it easy and productive to call when we have a concern?

How a Bill Becomes a Law in Wisconsin

(adapted from <https://legis.wisconsin.gov/about/follow>)



**Points where contact from WPA members might help lead to positive outcome*

For much more detailed information and specific examples see: <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/lrb/media/1093/14rb2.pdf>

Contacting your representatives

It's helpful to contact your representatives in the Assembly and the State Senate at the beginning of each legislative session. Here is what you want them to know:

- **You are a homeschooler and their constituent.**
- **Homeschoolers in Wisconsin want to preserve our good homeschooling laws.**
- **Homeschoolers DO NOT want anything from the State (especially funding and/or to be treated like a special interest).**

If a bill is introduced about homeschooling or preferential treatment for homeschoolers, they then have the background to know that homeschoolers do not want the laws to change and do not want favors.

Be willing to answer questions about homeschooling or refer them to the WPA website.

With this initial introduction, you are asking your representatives to do nothing, which can be surprising to them, but they will appreciate your call.

How to find your legislators: <https://legis.wisconsin.gov>

If WPA member action is required

No matter which party you support or who represents you, you can almost always find something that your legislator voted on that you agree with. Starting your conversation with a thank you can be an effective way to grab their attention.

Phone calls are more effective than any other form of communication with your legislators. Emails and letters can also be helpful, but talking with your legislator or someone from his/her office is immediate and usually more memorable. It also gives them a chance to ask you questions, if they have any. At this point it is also helpful to leave them with WPA's website should any additional questions arise.

Remember that, as a homeschooler, you are really only trying to make two points.

- **The homeschooling laws in Wisconsin are working and you want them to remain as they are.**
- **As a homeschooler, you do not want any favors from the state.**

If you are nervous about calling, plan your points in advance and call after-hours to get your legislator's voicemail. Remember that when you call, you should begin the call with your home address so the legislator knows you are one of their constituents.

Personal responsibility is the foundation of homeschooling in Wisconsin. Knowing how the legislative process works, and getting involved, are part of protecting our homeschooling freedoms.

We are always happy to hear from members about issues in your area. Please keep in touch. We will too!

2016 Conference Re-cap

The 2016 WPA Conference was an amazing gathering of homeschooling families looking to make connections, gather information, and celebrate homeschooling.

The Opening Ceremonies included a giant thank-you to retiring founders Larry and Susan Kaseman.

We also celebrated 7 young people as they embark on a new phase in life, acknowledged by their parents for completion of their homeschooling years. Words from one of this year's honorees are included below:

Top 10 reasons why I loved being homeschooled!

A list by Olivia Landowski

Making its way to the list; coming in at Number 10 is...

- Having the opportunity to learn and grow in my own way on a path that I created and formed; with the help of my guidance counselor and principal (Thanks Momma Clipdis and Big Daddy!).
 - Oh for the love of books! Spending countless hours reading on my own as well as my mom reading all the Newbery Medal books and more to us. This eventually led me to get a job at our local library because reading and being a part of my town's community is important to me.
 - Going on little adventures; whether it was our *Little House on the Prairie* days, spending a day canoeing down the Milwaukee river, delivering May baskets to our friends and family or even volunteering at the nursing home by letting the residents throw snowballs at us because they hadn't done that since they were kids.
 - Having the luxury of spending unending quality time in nature, including impromptu visits to Mauthe Lake in October to go swimming when there would be unseasonably warm temperatures and embracing the fact that we had the beach all to ourselves.
 - This one is for everyone who has been a part of my life and accepting me for who I am and all of my quirks. To grow up within an atmosphere of being loved and accepted has really made being homeschooled a blessing for me. I've been encouraged, motivated, and inspired to do good and be the best I can be... So thank you!
 - Spending several hours in the morning having our "table talks" while discussing *Life's Greatest Lessons* by Hal Urban over a cup of tea. Also, reflecting on our goals, struggles and what kind of person we want to be.
 - Traveling to 47 of the 48 continental states in the back seat of our van squished between my sister's action figures and my 37 Nancy Drew books (ya know, in case there was a fire while we were gone... I didn't want to lose any of my books:))
 - Starting two businesses with my three sisters to support and visit the ministries we are passionate about in India. And the eye opening experience of visiting a 3rd world country on 3 separate occasions.
 - The opportunity to obtain my EMT license before I officially graduated which has enabled me to get a jumpstart on my career goals as a paramedic/firefighter.
- But the number 1 reason as to why I LOVED being homeschooled is because of my family; getting to spend almost everyday with them has been a joy of mine and I wouldn't want to share this journey with anyone else.

What's next?

Our 2016 conference was a wonderful event. It was also an event that made us realize that WPA has outgrown UW Oshkosh as a venue both in terms of space and services. With a large amount of expected construction for 2017, we have decided that UWO will not work for us for 2017.

It is tremendously difficult to find a venue with affordable lodging that can accommodate a group our size.

The good news? We did it! **Our 2018 conference (35th Anniversary of WPA) will be held at the Stevens Point Holiday Inn and Convention Center.** It is a gorgeous location, the entire conference will be in one building, the food is amazing and there are traditional hotel rooms. 2018 will usher in a new era for the WPA Conference that we are very excited to share with you.

Conference centers book up years in advance--that's why we have to wait until 2018. Luckily, we have a plan for 2017. The annual member event for 2017 will be something different.

Join us for our 2017 Spring Extravaganza on Saturday, May 13th in Stevens Point. This is a chance to join others and explore the unique history of homeschooling in Wisconsin, attend the annual membership meeting, celebrate homeschoolers moving on to the next phase of their lives through graduation, have an opportunity to ask questions of experienced homeschoolers during table talks, and be renewed and inspired by spending a day surrounded by homeschoolers. So save the date, and watch the WPA website for more information.

Get involved

Want to write for the newsletter? Interested in Legislative Watch? Do you love planning events? Can you help with conference planning?

Email wpa@homeschooling-wpa.org with your name, skills and interests.

Did you know that your local support group can make \$5 for each person who joins your group and WPA at the same time? More info on the website: <https://homeschooling-wpa.org/leaders/>

Can you host an event in your area to let people know about WPA? Get in touch with your Regional Contact and make it happen.

Does your business have a matching program for charitable donations? WPA is a 501(c)3 and all donations are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

WPA members are welcome to attend board meetings. The next board meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 29 at 10 am. Email wpa@homeschooling-wpa.org for more details.

Homeschooling with Integrity

Remarks from this year's opening ceremonies by WPA President and Issues Director Pamela Roland

I have been volunteering for WPA for the past 9 years and over time, I've had the chance to get to know so many dedicated homeschoolers. From the founding families of WPA to homeschoolers that are just getting started, I have come to realize that committing to the endeavor of homeschooling takes a great deal of courage and a great deal of integrity.

Before 1984, parents living in Wisconsin who chose to educate their children at home faced disapproval and intervention from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, the educational establishment, and even their own neighbors.

Before 1984, families could be charged with truancy and faced stiff fines and jail time for pursuing homeschooling. When all of this came to a head, legislation was drafted specifically addressing homeschooling. If that legislation had been passed as it was originally written, homeschooling in Wisconsin would be very different than it is today. At the time, homeschooling families came together and decided that they would fight restrictive legislation, knowing that educating their children according to their own principles and beliefs worked and that they wanted the freedom to do just that, without excessive state oversight.

They came together as the Wisconsin Parents Association. Some of those families are here tonight, continuing to support homeschooling freedom in Wisconsin.

Our conference theme this year is "Homeschooling with Integrity." One of the definitions of "integrity" is the state of being whole and undivided. This group decided early on that being undivided was the only way to stand against the powerful educational establishment and win a homeschooling law that provided freedom for all homeschoolers.

Those who had teaching certificates agreed that they would not accept a law that required teaching certificates for homeschooling parents.

Those who used a specific curriculum agreed that they would not accept a law that required approval of curriculum.

Those who thought their children would do well on standardized tests agreed that they would not accept a law that required standardized testing.

And so on.

These parents knew that they were taking a risk and yet they stood undivided in their agreement that none would compromise, but instead they would stand firm for the freedom of all homeschoolers. Because these homeschooling families, working through WPA, fought for our current law and then, even after it passed, fought each time legislation or public policy arose that would threaten it, we are all here today.

We still have to be brave to choose homeschooling, but it is a lot easier because of what these families did more than 30 years ago. Our families don't have to stay indoors with the curtains drawn during school hours. There isn't a chance that, on the whim of someone from the DPI, our family could be denied the right to homeschool. We have no idea of the terrifying feeling of getting a knock at the door from a public official that might be calling into question the legality of what we are doing. We have a law that says that as long as we are in legal compliance with the few very reasonable requirements, we have protection to educate our children according to our own principles and beliefs.

In so many other states, homeschooling doesn't look like it does in Wisconsin. Homeschoolers in our neighboring states are required to provide such things as annual reporting, standardized testing, and education for their children that is "substantially similar to public or private schools in their district of residence." In states further away, parents may need to get permission from their school district to homeschool, approval of their curriculum, a teaching certificate or a college degree.

Each year or two, we face challenges to our freedom to homeschool in the way in which we have become accustomed. Because of WPA, homeschoolers don't hear about many of those challenges—they are defused before they can change the way we homeschool.

I've come to realize, however, that enough time has passed since 1984 that many homeschoolers in the state aren't aware of the history of homeschooling in Wisconsin, and don't seem to understand that unless we stand together things could change. One bill or amendment to a bill could change homeschooling in Wisconsin. Without this memory, some homeschoolers think that because they hear nothing, there is no challenge. The homeschooling community has forgotten that there was a time in Wisconsin that homeschooling was a risky thing to do.

Today, I'd like to thank the founders of WPA who, with integrity and courage, didn't settle for a homeschooling law that divided homeschoolers, but that protected, for each and every one of us, the ability to educate our children according to our own principles and beliefs.

And I'd like to ask something from all of you. Homeschool responsibly, in gratitude for what these families have worked so hard for; think about what is best for all Wisconsin homeschoolers and act accordingly.

And, join WPA as an active member and encourage others to do the same. WPA is committed to preserving the good homeschooling law in Wisconsin.

You were brave enough to choose homeschooling, now be brave enough to help us preserve it. WPA only continues as long as there are members who understand the value of what we have and what it would mean if we lost it.

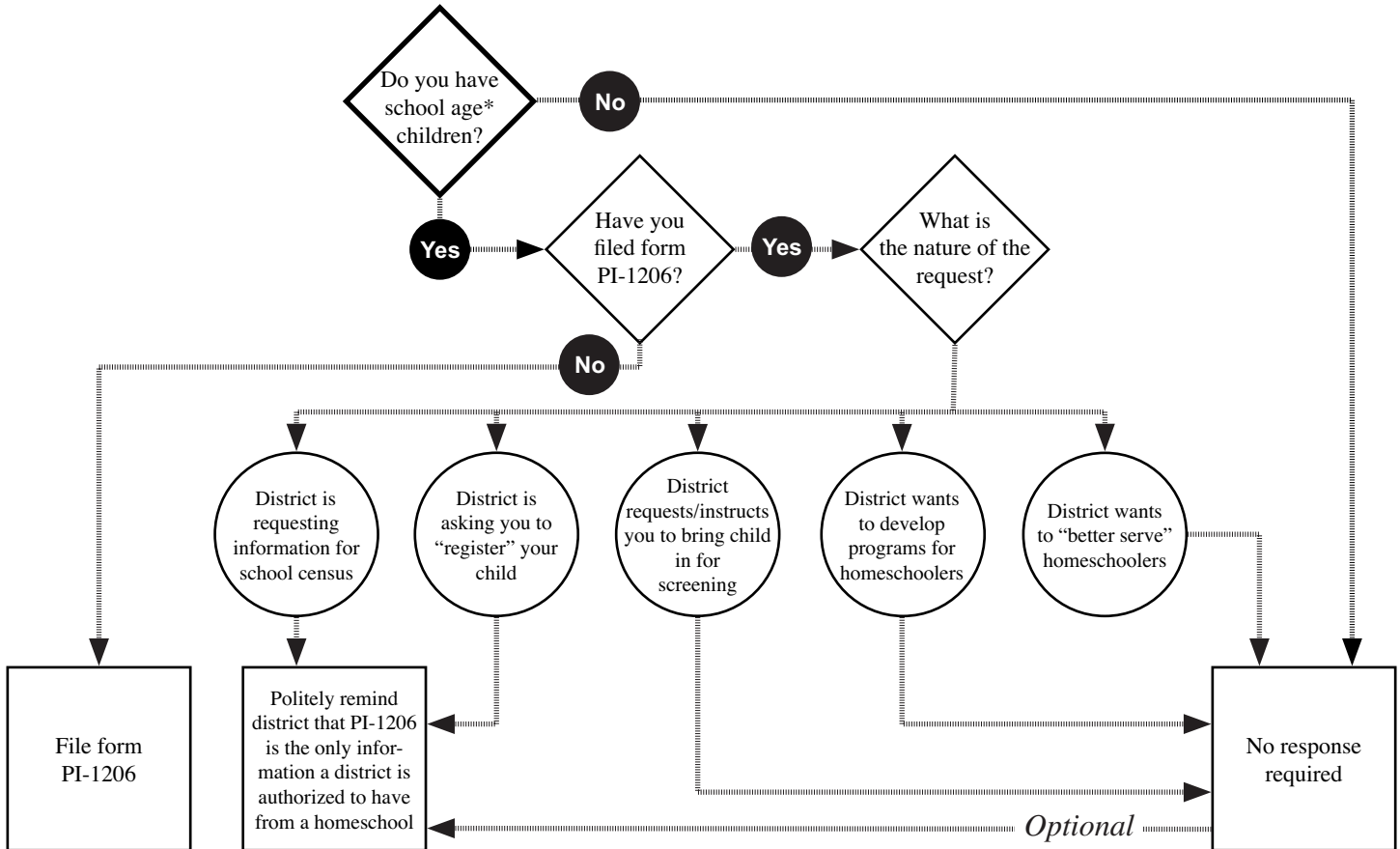
Any time WPA representatives meet with legislators, the first question the legislators ask is, "How many people does your organization represent?" We have to be united now and be willing to act if necessary. We need to be willing to stand undivided in our agreement that none will compromise, but instead that we will stand firm, together, for the freedom of all homeschoolers.

Responding to Contact from School Districts

An ongoing issue for Wisconsin homeschoolers is school districts sending surveys, letters and inquiries to homeschooling families requesting information to which they are not legally entitled. School officials and opponents of homeschooling are less likely to challenge homeschoolers who know the law, are complying with it, and are acting in ways that protect their freedoms.

Here is a flow chart to help you understand how you should respond to some of the most common inquiries:

I received a request for information from my local school district. What should I do?



*Defined as age 6 on or before September 1 of the current year.

The information on the PI-1206 form is a report of enrollment. Use of information from PI-1206 forms for purposes other than record keeping is a violation of the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

It takes time and energy to defend our homeschooling rights. Ideally homeschoolers who receive requests like these from their school districts would write letters stating that the district has no authority to ask for this information and also asking not to be contacted by the district again.

Sometimes the contacts from the districts are to inform you about an upcoming screening or enrollment opportunity or asking for ideas on "working with homeschoolers." These are requests that you could respond to or, if you aren't comfortable responding, you can choose not to respond.

If your school district contacts you requesting more specific information (i.e. children's names, ages, health status, or disabilities, parents' occupation, income, etc.) or telling you that you must "register" your child with the school in any way, those are situations that need to be addressed with a letter.

We are all responsible for standing up for our homeschooling freedoms and for acting in ways that protect all homeschooling families in Wisconsin.

It is very helpful to us when our members let us know when these types of contacts are being made. Please send us an email or forward any requests you receive from your school district to wpa@homeschooling-wpa.org.

Did you know?

Record-keeping

The Department of Public Instruction only maintains records for 7 years. You must print out and save a copy of your PI-1206 form for each year as part of the recordkeeping for your homeschool.

Homeschooling in Wisconsin vs. Other States

Other states, including Minnesota, require annual testing. Does Wisconsin have this requirement? NO.

Other states, including Illinois, are required to prove that their homeschool meets “state standards.” Does Wisconsin have this requirement? NO.

Other states, including Massachusetts, require homeschoolers to get approval from and to report to their local school board. Does Wisconsin have this requirement? NO.

Other states, including Maine, require homeschoolers to report annual assessments to the local superintendent. Does Wisconsin have this requirement? NO.

Other states, including Washington, require homeschool parents to meet criteria to be deemed “sufficiently qualified” to teach their children. Does Wisconsin have this requirement? NO.

Do we want any changes to our very reasonable law? NO!

Questions about what counts towards your 875 hours?

By filing form PI-1206, you agree to abide by Wisconsin Act 512 of 1983 (the specific statutes outlined on the PI-1206). Under this set of laws, you must provide a minimum of 875 hours of instruction in a “sequentially progressive curriculum in reading, language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, and health.” The law further specifies that a program of study “provided to more than one family unit does not constitute a home-based private educational program.”

WPA maintains that classes offered by an instructor to multiple family units may not hold up as instructional hours in a home-based private educational program, if these hours were challenged in court or through the legal system. Homeschool administrators must be able to provide evidence of compliance with the law.

WPA will not dictate to homeschool administrators what they can or cannot put on their transcripts or how they document 875 hours. The administrator should carefully consider what is included and that it is an accurate reflection of the home-based private educational program.

