



Wisconsin Parents Association Newsletter

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A Message from the President of WPA

Jodi Buntin, WPA Board President



On January 1, I began my new role as the new President of Wisconsin Parents Association, and I am humbled and honored to serve in this capacity. The WPA board is very grateful to Pamela Roland and Jen Lynch for all they have done for WPA, and we wish them many blessings as they embark on the next chapter in their lives.

Now that the WPA board transition to a working board is complete, we are very excited about the possibilities and opportunities which lie ahead. We remain committed to protecting and preserving each family's right and freedom to educate their children according to their beliefs and principles, just like those families who came together in January 1984 and formed WPA.

WPA will continue its essential functions, which include our Question Answering Committee (QAC), maintaining and updating our website and Facebook page, our legislative watch, our semi-annual newsletter, and our member events and conferences. We will be holding a member event in June, and we are looking to hold a conference in 2020. We are also in the process of positioning ourselves to take advantage of new opportunities to better serve and keep our members informed.

As we did in 1984, WPA in 2019 continues its commitment to **unity** - where we, as homeschoolers, will set aside our differences and personal preferences, and will affirm, support, and preserve the right and freedom of all homeschoolers to educate their children according to their own beliefs and

principles, using the education methods which work best for their family.

What else do we need? We need each and every one of **you!** We need you to be ambassadors for our very reasonable homeschooling law, by doing the following:

- Share accurate information about Wisconsin's homeschooling law.
- Let your homeschooling friends know about the resources available at the WPA website, and if they are not members of WPA, encourage them to join us.
- Develop a positive relationship with your legislators - state and federal - communicating to them the importance of preserving Wisconsin's homeschool law, which has been working since 1984.

In closing, I am grateful for each one of our members and look forward to serving WPA to the best of my ability.

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Legislative Watch Update

One of WPA's main functions is Legislative Watch. WPA's Legislative Watch Committee, comprised of volunteers, is constantly on the lookout for potential issues that would have an impact on Wisconsin homeschoolers. Through vigilance and hard work we watch, inform, and ask for action when needed. In this way, we are able to head off many issues that could become problematic for homeschoolers before they get a foothold. If you would like to join our Legislative Watch Committee, contact us at wpa@homeschooling-wpa.org.



H.R.65 and H.R.621/S.157 are still pending

Each of these bills would amend the Internal Revenue Code that permits kindergarten through grade 12 educational expenses to be paid from a Section 529 education savings account to be expanded to include qualified homeschooling expenses. The previous times this proposal was presented, many homeschoolers (including WPA) did not support this change and the legislation was either revised to remove the homeschool provision, or the legislation did not pass.

Why is this legislation a problem for Wisconsin homeschoolers?

The biggest concern for Wisconsin homeschoolers is that this allows the federal government to determine what is considered an educational expense by creating guidelines for defining a "qualified expense."

In other states, where homeschoolers have to use state-approved curriculum or specific standardized tests, this may not seem like a problem. However, in Wisconsin, homeschooling parents/guardians are administrators of their homeschool and they alone determine what is considered educational and what type of curriculum they include in their homeschool program. This bill threatens to define what is considered a legitimate homeschooling expense, limiting the freedom of homeschoolers in Wisconsin.

In addition, if homeschoolers took advantage of this program, they would have to answer to the federal government as well as the state government to show that the homeschooling expenses they claim are acceptable.

If you have not yet done so, please take a moment to contact your U.S. Senators and your U.S. Representative and let them know that homeschoolers do not support H.R.65 and

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Federal and state legislature and administration changes

2019 marked the start of a new Congress, as well as a new administration in Wisconsin. In the midst of all this, there are efforts to change education laws and policies, some of which may affect homeschoolers. In addition to monitoring these changes, here are some of the issues our Legislative Watch Committee is keeping on top of:

The Wisconsin 2019-21 biennial budget

The 2019-21 biennial budget process is underway, and the Legislative Watch Committee is monitoring the process for any provisions which may affect homeschoolers. (As a reminder, the sports and homeschool diploma legislation were introduced in the 2015-17 budget cycle as amendments.) WPA will inform you of any action which may be needed.

Quick facts on the QAC

Q *What is the QAC?*

A The Question Answering Committee (QAC) responds to questions received via the WPA voicemail ((608) 283-3131) and email (questions@homeschooling-wpa.org).

Q *When did the QAC start?*

A This committee was formed in June 2018, and replaced the former Regional Contact system.

Q *Who works on this committee?*

A Currently at six volunteers, including the QAC coordinator, our QAC members are all former Regional Contacts, who take turns answering questions.

Q *Do the QAC committee members get paid?*

A LOL!

Q *What kinds of questions are received?*

A Anything related to homeschooling, and some topics not related to homeschooling! For example, we regularly receive questions on how to begin homeschooling, questions on how to choose curriculum, questions about high school, and questions about record keeping. We have also received questions on how to transition from a traditional school environment to homeschooling, and have been asked to help with special situations, such as where to find the instructions for filing the necessary school paperwork for Social Security survivor benefits.

Q *Where does the QAC get the information to answer questions?*

A The volunteers who make up the QAC are experienced homeschool parents.

Most have been involved in supporting other homeschoolers for several years. Many questions can be answered with the accurate information available on the WPA website. For “trickier” questions, the QAC members consult the QAC coordinator to make sure the answers given are accurate.

Additionally, the committee meets at least once a year for further discussion and training.

Q *Why would anyone volunteer for this committee?*

A We asked our QAC volunteers, and here are some of the responses we received:

“I do all that I do, including volunteer for the QAC, because I have a love for the homeschooling community that includes making sure they are getting thoughtful, accurate information. I love being a source of encouragement to fellow homeschoolers, to those just learning the ropes, and to those who are trying to decide if homeschooling is the route they want to go. So, even when I have answered the same question for the bazillionth time, I still don’t mind doing it because I know it is not just helping that person, but then they will have accurate information to share with their friends as well.”

“I work on the QAC to deepen my understanding of homeschool law as well as share correct information with all homeschoolers. I work

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Legislative Watch Update (continued from page 2)

H.R.621/S.157. (Since these are all federal legislation, there is no need to contact your State Senator or Representative at this time.)

Find your U.S. Senators and U.S. Representatives here: <https://whoismyrepresentative.com>

Contacting your legislators

IMPORTANT REMINDER: If you have not done so yet, please contact your state and federal representatives, as WPA asks at the beginning of each year. When you do this, please:

- Be respectful. Even if you disagree with your elected official, there is often an opportunity to find common ground and thank them for something they have done that you do agree with.
- Let them know that you are a homeschooler and their constituent.
- Share with them that homeschoolers in Wisconsin want to preserve our good

homeschooling laws.

- Be clear that homeschoolers DO NOT want anything from the State (especially funding, tax breaks, and/or to be treated like a special interest).
- Be willing to answer questions about homeschooling or refer them to the WPA website.

This is one of the most effective things homeschoolers can do to preserve our current homeschooling freedom. If elected officials know that their homeschooled constituents do not want legislation, they may be less likely to introduce a bill about homeschooling and/or more likely not to support a bill if introduced by others.

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

How to find your federal legislators:
<https://whoismyrepresentative.com>

Quick facts on the QAC (continued from page 3)

to strengthen law-abiding homeschooling in Wisconsin so all homeschoolers can benefit and the current Wisconsin homeschool law may be maintained. I work with the QAC because I value the Wisconsin Parents Association. I am grateful for the organization, the work it's done, and the experienced volunteers that make it a reality."

"I want homeschooling to be an option for the next generation. None of my grandchildren live in Wisconsin, but I want the option for all the grandchildren who do live in Wisconsin. Unless we have a clear understanding of the incredible law we have, and work to maintain the law as it is written, the law will be altered. We must remain vigilant to maintain this educational option. If the

law is changed, we will no doubt lose flexibility to tailor homeschooling to best suit each child in each family. Every child, every family, is unique. It is a privilege to express that uniqueness through our approach to education."

Please note: WPA provides information about homeschooling in Wisconsin. It is the responsibility of each homeschool administrator/parent or guardian to read original source material and make decisions on compliance for themselves. WPA does not provide legal advice or counsel and does not endorse or provide curriculum suggestions or specific materials for any particular educational approach. When you file the PI-1206 with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, you take full responsibility for understanding and complying with the laws outlined on that form.

2019 Member Event



Save the Date for the
Wisconsin Parents Association
2019 Member Event on
Saturday, June 22nd,
at the Jensen Community Center
(centrally located in Amherst, Wisconsin)!



Join us for a day-long family-friendly event designed for learning, celebrating, and connecting with homeschool families from across Wisconsin and with WPA leadership. Our Member Event will include our annual membership meeting, a graduate recognition, information about what's new with WPA, fun activities for families, and opportunities to learn how to work together to keep homeschooling strong in Wisconsin.

More details and registration will be coming to all current WPA members at the end of April.

Know someone who would be a great WPA member? Invite them to join WPA today and come to the Member Event with you!
www.homeschooling-wpa.org/membership/

Special Call for Volunteers!

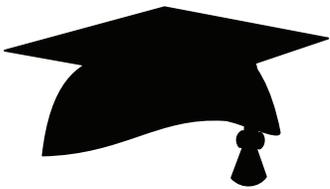


In order to provide you, our members, with the best possible family-friendly event, we are looking for some volunteers to help. Our most urgent need is for one or more members to organize, with guidance from the Committee, the "Family Activity Room" where attendees can come together for some fun. Past activities have included things like the Recycled City, Paper Airplanes, and Minute-to-Win-It games. We welcome your ideas and your enthusiasm. Other volunteer opportunities at the Event include: Set-up, Clean-up, Registration, and Food Distribution. If you are interested in helping, please email volunteers@homeschooling-wpa.org right away! Thank You!

WANTED: Your Photos and Graduates!

Graduates

Do you have a graduate in your family this year?



Please join us at this year's Member Event for WPA's Graduate Recognition Celebration. If you can attend, please send

your Graduate's name to OpeningCeremonies@homeschooling-wpa.org by May 15th. Our Graduate Recognition Coordinator will be in touch with more information.

Photographs

One of the highlights of WPA events is the slideshow depicting all the ways we homeschool. Even if you are unable to join us (and especially if you can) please send a few pictures of what homeschooling looks like in your life. It is so inspiring to see all the amazing families we have here in Wisconsin.

Please send up to three photos to OpeningCeremonies@homeschooling-wpa.org by May 22nd.

Membership Gift Ideas

Have you thought about giving unique or thoughtful gifts, but have run out of ideas? Are you tired of just giving gift cards and writing out checks?

How about a gift membership to WPA?

You could purchase a WPA membership for your local library, and this way, they will receive our semi-annual newsletter (which they can place into circulation), and they will also be kept informed of important issues facing homeschoolers through our emails.

You could purchase a WPA membership for a family who is just starting out on their homeschooling journey, so they can get off on the right foot by receiving accurate information about homeschooling.

You could purchase a WPA membership for your local support group so their leadership can be kept abreast of important issues which may affect their members.

You could purchase a WPA membership for a family member who doesn't homeschool, but who wants to learn more about it, or for that family member who might be skeptical of homeschooling, so they can get a realistic, accurate picture of homeschooling.



A membership to WPA is a meaningful gift! Visit www.homeschooling-wpa.org/membership/ to purchase memberships.