

## **TAC Ambassador Program**

It is my pleasure this month to announce a new program that is being introduced by our Town Advocacy Council called the **TAC Ambassador Program**. This program is being designed as a tool to aid our legislative advocacy efforts by fostering engagement between town officials and their state legislators. Before I get into the specifics of the program, however, I will first take a step back and provide some context in how WTA approaches legislative advocacy.

Much of our legislative advocacy heavy lifting is accomplished by the Town Advocacy Council (TAC). Founded in the 1980s, the TAC is a subsidiary of the Wisconsin Towns Association that has evolved over time. TAC is the primary instrument through which we provide legislative advocacy in support of towns. Without the investment in TAC by town leaders, we would not be able to provide the lobbying efforts that have recently produced a plethora of both offensive and defensive victories.

Before TAC shapes our advocacy efforts, however, those efforts begin as ideas from local officials like you. TAC and WTA staff help cultivate ideas as best we can, but all of our legislative priorities come directly from local officials who have expressed concerns and vocalized a need for change. In fact, as I am writing this article, TAC is in the middle of its legislative listening session cycle when it hosts meetings to hear from town and village officials about current needs and future legislative priorities.

After it hears from you, the TAC executive committee considers the issues presented at listening sessions and creates a recommended list of priorities for the lobbying team. This list of priorities is based on many factors including need, expediency, potential gains, and various political realities. The recommendations then go to the WTA board of directors for consideration and eventual approval. Finally, TAC and the WTA lobbying team implement strategies to passionately advocate in support of those priorities and in support of towns.

### **What is the TAC Ambassador Program?**

TAC and the WTA lobbying team have been very successful in recent years promoting town interests. That success, along with the continued investment in TAC by member towns and villages, has put us in a position to take a new step forward in how we support and defend local government. That next step is the creation of the Town Ambassador Program.

This program will draw on a select group of engaged town officials from every legislative district who volunteer to develop a relationship with their state legislators and engage with those legislators on WTA's priorities. TAC Ambassadors will be on the front lines of our advocacy efforts and will receive regular educational opportunities to support their mission.

## What are the expectations of TAC Ambassadors?

New TAC Ambassadors will be provided with all of the training and information necessary for their success. That training will include an overview of current legislative priorities, a description of Wisconsin's legislative process, and tips for engaging with legislators on the issues. The primary goal of this program is simply to develop a relationship with your legislators and have discussions about local issues. We firmly believe that good communication and active relationships between local and state officials is necessary for effective governance.

After the initial meeting of the TAC Ambassadors, we intend to have ongoing trainings and discussions as a group to provide updates on specific legislative priorities and to determine how we can best advocate for those priorities. Ambassadors will then be expected to initiate (with our help) informal meetings or phone calls with their state legislators a few times a year to build relationships and discuss town issues. We will also rely heavily on the Ambassadors to help us determine how to shape this program for future success.

## How can I get involved?

The new TAC Ambassador Program offers an exciting opportunity for increased engagement by passionate local officials. We are confident that with your help and involvement we can take this next step and create a powerful voice for Wisconsin towns. For more information on the TAC Ambassador Program, or to be considered for the program, please **contact Joe Ruth at the WTA office.**

Additionally, please consider investment in the Town Advocacy Council as you prepare your 2021 budget.

### **In the last 5 years, the TAC has influenced adoption of 57 pieces of legislation & leveraged over \$300 million in efficiencies and additional funding.**

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- ✓ Transportation funding
- ✓ LOSAP funding
- ✓ Broadband grants
- ✓ MFL payments
- ✓ Recycling grants
- ✓ BCPL preservation
- ✓ Publication cost savings
- ✓ Prevented increased road weight limits
- ✓ And much more!

### **TAC members also receive:**

- ✓ One Town Officers' Handbook per edition
- ✓ Weekly federal legislative updates
- ✓ Free website access to WTA educational videos
- ✓ Decreased TAC workshop registration fees
- ✓ Pride of being a leading town

### **How to join TAC?**

TAC membership is only \$0.25 per capita with a cap of \$2,500 per town. TAC dues are voluntary and separate from WTA membership dues. To enhance your town's leadership and become a Town Advocacy Council member, or to obtain more information, contact WTA staff.