



# The Michigan State Capitol Tour, Education, & Information Service



A Legislator Guide to Services

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## **The Capitol Tour, Education, & Information Service**

The purpose of the Capitol Education Service is to share the Capitol's extraordinary history, art, and architecture with the public, and to help visitors learn more about their state government. Our goal is to make every visitor feel welcome in their Capitol and proud to be a Michigan citizen.

As of July 2022, our team includes eight staff members holding degrees in history, political science, art history, library science, public history, and museum studies. We are a nonpartisan agency committed to providing visitors with the best possible experience at their Capitol.

We also work with a small number of volunteer Docents who lead tours in the fall and the spring. Most of our docents are retirees with diverse backgrounds including former teachers, doctors, nurses, state and federal employees, and business and non-profit professionals.

## **What We Do**

### **Conduct and Schedule Tours**

Education staff provides in-person and virtual tours of the Capitol to approximately 115,000 people annually. We schedule guided tours of the Capitol and self-guided visits to the Michigan History Museum and help teachers and group leaders plan their trips to Lansing.

### **Staff Information Desks**

Capitol Educators also staff the information desks in Heritage Hall and on the ground floor of the Capitol where we greet visitors, answer questions, give directions, etc.

### **Manage the Capitol's Collections**

Members of our staff assist with the acquisition, organization, and general care of the Capitol's collection of artifacts, images, and archival resources.

## Research and Interpretation

We never stop learning about our Capitol! Capitol educators are constantly researching its history, and sharing our knowledge through exhibits, publications, programs, videos, and social media.

**Follow us @mistatecapitol**

## Save the Flags

Members of the education team also administer Save the Flags, a not-for-profit which preserves, exhibits, and researches the Capitol's collection of battle flags, most of which date back to the Civil War. Staff members trained in textile conservation also work on the flags in the conservation lab in Heritage Hall.

## Spring Music Program

In May, we invite school bands, orchestras, and ensembles to perform at the Capitol. Our staff schedules their performances and coordinates their visits.

## Special Services for Legislators

The Capitol Tour, Education, & Information Service helps to coordinate tours for the guests of legislators by request and facilitates meetings between legislators and Capitol visitors. Legislators and staff are welcome to greet groups from their district, introduce groups during House or Senate session, and provide publications for groups to take home.

## Notice of Upcoming Tours

All upcoming tours are published on our website at [capitol.michigan.gov/schedules](http://capitol.michigan.gov/schedules). Our web database identifies the legislative district by the group's street address. We make every effort to ensure schools and other groups are listed under the correct district number. Additionally, when tour groups arrive at the Capitol we will contact the office to notify you.

## Distribution of Literature

When a group visits us, you have the opportunity to provide them with publications to take home such as self-guided tour books, coloring books, Citizens Guides, bookmarks, etc. When we call your office upon the group's arrival, we will let you know the number of students and adults visiting, as well as their grade level so you can give them the correct number of age-appropriate publications.

**Please drop books off at our information desk on the ground floor of the Capitol, even if our staff is not present.** We will collect the books and give them to the group at the end of the tour. It is helpful for us if books are labeled with the date or the school's name. You are welcome to bring all the books for one day at once, but please don't bring books more than a few days in advance as we have limited storage space.

## Session Introductions

On session days, Educators fill out distinctive orange introduction cards for each of our scheduled tours. The cards record the name, grade, and size of the group. When the legislature is in session, the guide first seats the group in the public galleries, and then gives the intro card to a sergeant who will bring it to you on the chamber floor.

When the order of business allows, you may introduce the group to your colleagues. It is traditional to ask your fellow legislators to join you in welcoming your constituents to the Capitol.

We understand sometimes session business does not allow for an immediate introduction. In that case, we will wait as long as possible, (usually 5 - 10 minutes) but we may have to leave to keep the group on schedule.

## Interacting With Tour Groups

While it is not possible for Legislators or staffers to interact with all the groups from their districts, from time to time, you may want to personally greet a particular group or school. **Please let our staff know when you'd like to see a group.** We can help coordinate the meeting during their tour. Legislators can also take guests onto the chamber floor in the House or Senate. Visitors are not allowed 30 minutes before or after session.

**When Talking to Groups, Please Keep the Following in Mind: Introduce Yourself,** kids and many adults will not know who you are. Start by telling them your name and what you do here.

### Keep Your Remarks Brief

About 5 minutes is usually enough. Most groups have a very busy day in Lansing and have a limited amount of time to see the Capitol.

### Keep Remarks Age-appropriate

Keep your vocabulary simple and kid-friendly. Students don't know terms like 'caucus,' 'lobbyist,' or 'legislation.' If you use these words be prepared to define them.

### Limit the Questions

Our young visitors are very curious, and you will not have time to answer all their questions. It's usually best to take 4 or 5.

### Let Us Help!

If you can't answer a question, or you're having trouble explaining something, don't hesitate to ask the tour guide for help. We are there to make this meeting go as smoothly as possible.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### When is the Capitol Open for Tours?

The Capitol and Heritage Hall are open Monday-Friday, 8:00-5:00. The Capitol will also stay open to the public anytime the legislature is in session. We offer guided tours between 9:00 and 4:00, every hour or half-hour depending on our schedule and staffing level. Guests can also take a self-guided tour.

## Who Visits the Capitol?

Between September and June, most of our visitors are here on school field trips. Michigan students usually visit in 3rd or 4th grade when they are studying state history and government, but we provide tours for kids of all ages from preschool through high school.

We also book many tours for college classes, senior citizen groups, professional organizations, etc. In addition, we greet tourists from all over Michigan, and around the world. Every tour we give will vary depending on the needs and interests of the group.

## How Do I Schedule a Tour?

**We ask that groups of 10 or more people call 517-373-2353 to make a reservation. We cap each tour at 45 people total.** Demand for Capitol tours during the school day is high, especially in the spring. We book tours up to one year in advance of the current date, and most spring days fill up months ahead of time.

Groups under 10 can simply check in with us at one of our information desks to join the next tour.

**If you receive requests for tours from a school or other large group, please give them our contact info so we can work with them directly.**

If you have constituents at the Capitol for a special event, we will schedule a tour for them if possible, but please understand we might not be able to accommodate them. **Please ask your guests if they want a tour, as some are not interested, and please make sure they have at least 45 minutes to spend with us.** Our staff has many responsibilities and while we are happy to share our Capitol with your guests, the tour is an educational opportunity, not a way to 'fill time' during their visit.

## Where Do Tours Start?

Guided tours usually start in Heritage Hall and end on the Capitol's ground floor. We recommend visitors enter at Heritage Hall, 323 West Ottawa St. They can also enter at the east or west entrances on the ground floor of the Capitol.

## How Long are Tours?

Guided tours last about an hour, and typically include the exhibits in Heritage Hall, the Capitol rotunda, Governor's Office, Old Supreme Court, and House & Senate Chambers.

## Is there a Charge for Tours?

No, Capitol tours are always free!

## Do All Visitors Have to Take a Guided Tour?

No. Guests can take a self-guided tour using books available at Heritage Hall and the ground floor information desk, or at [capitol.michigan.gov/Publications](http://capitol.michigan.gov/Publications).

## How Do I Identify a Tour Guide?

Education staff and docents wear name tags while on tour. Additionally, staff are in a uniform of black slacks or skirts and black blazers or sweaters.

## Can Staffers Lead Tours?

Our preference is that you allow our staff of professional educators to lead tours, but we understand there may be times when this is not possible. Legislative staffers are permitted to lead tours, but **we recommend you keep the group under 45 people** as you will be competing for space with all the other tour groups in the building. **Staffers are responsible for making sure they are sharing accurate information**, managing the group, and keeping them from interfering with other tours, events, etc. Poorly supervised students can damage the delicate historic surfaces of the Capitol, or even pose a danger to themselves and others.

If you let our staff know you will be leading a tour ahead of time, we will be happy to provide advice.

## Accessibility Resources

The Capitol Tour, Education, and Information Service strives to make the Capitol accessible and enjoyable for all guests. Tours are elevator accessible, and two wheelchairs are available for guests to borrow.

Family restrooms are located in the west wing of the ground floor, and in Heritage Hall.

We have self-guided books in large print and braille and keep a number of touchable items to share with visitors who are blind. Hearing aid devices are available upon request, and we can schedule an American Sign Language interpreter to assist with tours. We also have sensory friendly kits available upon request.

Self-guided tour books are available in Spanish, French, German, Russian, Japanese, Mandarin, and Arabic.

**We also offer virtual Capitol tours via Zoom.** These live, interactive tours are a good option for schools that are unable to visit in person.

## **Tour, Education, & Information Service**

517/373-2353 or 517/373-2348

[capitol.michigan.gov/Tours@mistatecapitol](http://capitol.michigan.gov/Tours@mistatecapitol)

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