

Capital Conduct at the State Capitol: Guidelines for Proper Decorum During Homeschool Iowa Capitol Day

Thank you for your interest in our NICHE Homeschool Iowa Capitol Day. This is your chance to help put a good face on homeschooling for our Governor, our legislators, and other members of the public who will be at the Capitol building. As such, it is important that we all adhere to some basic rule of proper decorum in how we conduct ourselves that day. Here is a brief list of some guidelines to help you in that task.

- **Proper Dress Shows Proper Respect.** You are coming to meet your elected officials, and the office they hold should be shown a degree of respect, even if the office holder is someone you dislike. We are Christ's ambassadors at this event, and we will thus be a reflection of the Savior to those people we meet. Business casual is the minimum recommended standard of dress for anyone participating in the events that day. If you do not own business casual or more formal clothing, then please come anyway and wear what you would for your Sunday worship meetings. Of course, displaying proper attitudes is of primary importance at this event, and the clothing we wear is secondary.
- **Families First.** One of the biggest benefits of homeschooling is that it helps build strong families. We encourage entire families to come to the event for any or all of the activities planned. It will be a strong testimony of how seriously we take our homeschooling liberties if all family members make an effort to come. We know that this event will allow many homeschoolers to see friends they do not often see, but our testimony will suffer if our teenagers are cloistered in the corners or our younger children are unsupervised, while we catch up with old friends. There will be plenty of time to renew connections at lunch or in the afternoon, but we need to keep to the forefront of our thoughts that we are there to help dispel myths and criticisms of homeschooling – not to support them. We are asking, therefore, that parents generally keep their children with them throughout their time at the event.
- **Talking the Talk.** It is interesting to see the range of comfort levels and approaches people have when addressing public officials. Some feel anxious or intimidated, while others are quite at ease. Some approach them with warmth and kindness, others with anger and hostility. While our elected officials hold offices worthy of respect, their positions as representatives should invite us to communicate with them. If we find ourselves at odds with the values and political positions of our representatives, we are directed to speak the truth in love. We can imitate God's kindness and grace that led us to repentance when we interact with legislators whose beliefs differ from our own. Unless you know your elected officials very well or they have asked to you address them on a first-name basis, they should be addressed with their title followed by their last name. Thus, you should address that person as "Governor Branstad," "Senator <Last Name>," or "Representative <Last Name>." Even those you know well should probably be addressed in public by title, unless the official asks you to do otherwise.

- **Redeeming the Time.** Portions of our Capitol Day schedule are designed to allow attendees to informally pursue suggested activities. However, certain scheduled items have specific times allotted (e.g. Capitol Tours, Training Sessions, etc.) It is important that we display a level of respectfulness that sets us apart from the rest of the world. We know that things certainly happen outside of our control that throw us off schedule; however, to the extent that your timing is within your control, we ask that you come to events scheduled throughout the day in a timely manner and that you respectfully listen to the speakers presenting at any given time. Homeschoolers on the whole are viewed as a polite group, and we do not want to let the buzz and excitement of the day's activities lead us to forget ourselves.

These guidelines are *not* an attempt to dictate a strict set of oppressive rules for participation in the event. We want everyone to come, to have a good time, and to be part of a great testimony for Christian homeschooling in Iowa. We do not plan to have "protocol police" making rounds to monitor your conduct and barking out orders. Please use these decorum guidelines to help you and your family put the very best face possible on homeschooling in Iowa while attending Homeschool Iowa Capitol Day.