



Women of Reform Judaism  
Pacific District



## **Pacific District Speaker Bureau Guidelines**

Updated September 2021

For more information, please contact  
Speakers Bureau Chair, Julia Wackenheim at [juliaville@gmail.com](mailto:juliaville@gmail.com).

### **What is the Pacific District Speakers Bureau (SB)?**

Speakers Bureau is a benefit of WRJ Pacific District affiliation membership: One guest speaker per sisterhood every two years from Pacific District.

You are also entitled to one WRJ guest speaker per sisterhood in the alternate years:

<https://wrj.org/wrj-speakers-bureau>

Invite a Pacific District speaker to inform, train, invigorate, and introduce your members to the special projects and programs of WRJ and Pacific District.

In addition, each year you might also receive visit(s) from your Area Director, providing her and your sisterhood with a chance to get better acquainted and to develop a strong relationship.

Area Director visits are arranged directly between the Area Director (AD) and the sisterhood. Since she is usually geographically closer, the AD may visit more easily and often, and be available for many things the Speakers Bureau offers, as well as for shorter or more casual activities - examples: present a charter and gavel, meet with a board to answer questions, provide a district presence. See other suggestions below.

### **What Can Pacific District Speakers Bureau Do for You?**

Pay for the speaker's travel expenses and make travel arrangements.

Help you identify appropriate topics and speakers.

Speakers are available for many occasions, or for other activities, always including the opportunity to talk about WRJ and Pacific District specifically:

- Sisterhood Shabbat - sermon, d'var Torah
- Installation - as installing officer or speaker
- Board /leadership training/orientation - general board orientation, specific topics such as strategic planning, budget, programming, communications, working together, "Just Ask" membership plan, social action ....
- A retreat - lead workshops or present topics on aspects of sisterhood
- YES Fund information and presentation
- Speak about social action programs / advocacy and our contributions
- Special event or celebration
- We can discuss "specialists" available from our WRJ-PD board.

## What Do We Ask You to Do?

- Make your request as early as possible, ideally at least three months in advance.
- If an exception is requested, we will do our best to work with you.
- Speakers generally are not available 3 weeks before or after district or WRJ conventions, or 2-3 weeks before/after area days.
- Notify your rabbi that a Pacific District guest will be at your synagogue.
- Communicate your expectations clearly.
- Respond to voicemails and emails in a timely manner.
- Provide home hospitality, if that meets the speaker's needs, or suggest a convenient hotel.
- Provide all meals and ground transportation.
- The speaker is your guest at any activity that has a fee (i.e. you assume financial responsibility for her attendance/participation).
- Allow sufficient time/exposure for the speaker to make the visit productive. A separate meeting with your board is excellent.
- Where appropriate, arrange meetings with the clergy, congregation leaders, or special interest groups.
- When appropriate, invite neighboring sisterhoods and potential WRJ affiliates. (The Affiliations Chair may contact you in this regard.)
- Introduce your guest at the event, and to congregation leadership (clergy, board).
- Complete and return the evaluation form of the visit.
- And, thank your speaker - a YES Fund or Pacific District e-card, Uniongram, or donation to a Pacific District fund would be appropriate and appreciated.
- If non-refundable transportation was purchased and you cancel after final plans are confirmed, you will be responsible for the cost of the tickets.

## What is the Process?

1. Choose your occasion and decide on your objectives for a speaker.
2. Submit an application (<http://www.wrjpacific.org/speaker-request.html>) at least three months before the event (when possible).
3. Speakers Bureau Coordinator will contact you to discuss details.
4. President and 1st VP will determine one or more options to be your guest - based on match to needs, convenience, availability, costs.
5. Speakers Bureau Coordinator will:
  - a. Contact you to finalize the decision.
  - b. Confirm speaker and details to all parties.
  - c. Provide the speaker's biography.
6. Speaker will call you to complete the arrangements.
  - a. See "What we ask you to do" above.
7. During the visit, enjoy the experience and the connection.

8. Complete and return the completed evaluation form – e-mail or snail mail to the Speakers Bureau Coordinator

**Paperwork** (available for email or printing at [www.wrjpacific.org](http://www.wrjpacific.org) under Resources).

- [Speaker's Evaluation](#) to be completed and returned to Speakers Bureau Coordinator within thirty days of visit.
- [Sisterhood's Evaluation](#) to be completed and returned to Speakers Bureau Coordinator within thirty days of visit

**Contact for 2018-2020:**

**Speakers Bureau Chair, Julia Wackenheim, at [juliaville@gmail.com](mailto:juliaville@gmail.com).**

### **Tips for Speakers**

When you visit a sisterhood, and at all times when communicating with the sisterhood contact and clergy, remember that you are representing Pacific District. Your attire, grooming, and demeanor are exceptionally important and must be appropriate and professional. Put your very best self forward and enjoy your visit and the connections you make.

Before the event when possible:

Speaker for a Shabbat service, or religious situation where congregation is included, should contact the rabbi personally, introduce herself, clarify her role, discuss how clergy expects the service to flow, time limits

When talking to the sisterhood representative, speaker should determine what to mention, compliment (also ask the AD): ex. recent events and awards, whom to acknowledge: ex. past PD, WRJ presidents and current board members

Also clarify and ensure that the sisterhood cleared activities with the rabbi; time limits or allocations (who else might be speaking); the audience – needs, expectations, targets (might also check with PD)

Know WRJ & PD structure, governance, departments, staff, liaisons and websites. Have current materials as appropriate.

To obtain any materials needed, contact WRJ Department of Service to Sisterhoods at 212-650- 4050 or [info@wrj.org](mailto:info@wrj.org).

You may also contact current or past Pacific District officers and presidents for any help with your presentation.

Option: provide the president with a packet of WRJ and PD information.

In person, even if the Rabbi knows you, re-introduce yourself. Clarify congregation culture (minhag) re. wearing tallit & kippah if you use them (primarily if and when).

**The presentation itself:**

Do not begin with using acronyms (like “WRJ”) ...You can do that later in your speech.

Bring greetings from (by name & title, contact SB if you need them): The president of WRJ, WRJ Executive Director, the president of WRJ Pacific District.

Thank the rabbi/clergy for inviting you to share the bimah.

Recognize the sisterhood president, board, membership, temple president and temple board.  
Compliment the cooking staff or the caterer.

Use the Torah portion for the week and refer to The Torah: A Women’s Commentary.

Share your sisterhood story/journey as a segue into a topic. Always include a review of WRJ, YES Fund and PD.

Weave in the benefits of WRJ and PD affiliation, some accomplishments of WRJ (NFTY, support of HUC, etc). Make mention of current/special projects such as YES Fund allocations, upcoming gatherings (convention, area day)>

Be aware of the main message: WRJ & PD mission statements and WRJ tag line “Stronger Together.”

At the end have a closing statement: (ex. "May you have a sweet week, Shabbat Shalom").

**At events:**

Go around the tables/room (ex. saying Shabbat Shalom) and introduce yourself. Listen actively and carefully.

Never make promises for WRJ, PD.

Watch for issues of concern, for positive attention, and identify future leaders.