

**AAUW Policy Leaders**

2023-2024 Resource Manual



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# **WELCOME**

Dear AAUW Public Policy Chair,

Since 1881, the American Association of University Women (AAUW) has been a nation's leading voice promoting equity and education for women and girls. For more than a century, AAUW has influenced legislative debate on critical issues affecting women and girls, and state and branch public policy chairs form the backbone of our effective grassroots advocacy. As volunteer leaders, public policy chairs at the state and branch level help to advance AAUW’s [Public Policy Priorities](https://www.aauw.org/resources/policy/aauw-public-policy-priorities/) while organizing and encouraging other AAUW members and supporters to do the same. We are excited to welcome you (new or returning) to this important role.

Advocating is as simple as finding a cause that makes you tick and uniting people to take action toward that common cause. As an AAUW member you have chosen to join a community with a mission of empowering women and girls. The people around you in AAUW share this goal, and your job as a public policy chair is to give them the skills and inspiration they need to take collective action to achieve it.

This manual provides an overview of the public policy chair role, the basics of public policy and advocacy, and sample tactics to take action. It also includes contact information for AAUW national public policy staff, a list of advocacy how-to resources, and excerpts of relevant AAUW policies. We hope it will give you the foundation to lead advocacy efforts in your state or branch, and we will build on that foundation with additional resources.

Working with the public policy chairs is one of our favorite parts of our jobs. Our job as AAUW national public policy staff is to share the tools, training, and technical assistance you need to be successful at this task. We’re here to help — get in touch with us any time you need a hand making your advocacy the most effective it can be.

Each of you is able to make such a difference, whether it’s by changing the laws in your state, getting elected officials to listen to their constituents, mobilizing well-informed voters, or mentoring other advocates. We look forward to working with you this year. Thank you for your ongoing dedication to AAUW and our mission.

Yours in AAUW,

Meghan Kissell, Robin Lucas, and Kalina Majercak
AAUW National Public Policy Team

## **AAUW National Public Policy Staff**

AAUW’s national public policy staff is here for you! We can help by:

1. Providing updates on federal policy issues.
2. Helping develop advocacy strategies and sharing advice, and best practices.
3. Providing talking points on core policy issues.

**Getting to Know Us**

All questions about your leadership role or AAUW’s public policy work, including any member questions or comments, can be directed to a member of the team below.

* **Meghan Kissell** (kissellm@aauw.org) is the Senior Director, Policy and Member Advocacy. She leads AAUW’s non-partisan and mission-driven public policy at the federal level and supports the grassroots advocacy work of AAUW’s membership network.
* **Robin Lucas** (lucasr@aauw.org) is the Grassroots Advocacy Manager. She manages grassroots work with a focus on providing timely engagement opportunities for AAUW audiences, and manages the State Public Policy Chair cohort.

	+ **Robin is your main point of contact**, but please include Meghan when asking about specific policy or legislation.
* **Kalina Majercak** (majercakk@aauw.org) is the Policy Associate. She represents supports the Policy and Member Advocacy Department on coalition outreach and the Capitol Hill Lobby Corps, and splits time with working on AAUW’s global policy programs.

## **State Public Policy Chair Responsibilities**

It’s an exciting and important time to be an AAUW state public policy chair (SPPC). As an SPPC you are instrumental in driving advocacy strategy and organizing AAUW members and supporters to have an impact at the local, state, and federal levels. For your reference, here’s the job description for your role.

**AAUW State Public Policy Chair Job Description**
SPPCs advocate AAUW’s[Public Policy Priorities](https://www.aauw.org/resources/policy/aauw-public-policy-priorities/) to policy makers; represent AAUW Public Policy Priorities to AAUW members, the public, and the media; organize AAUW members and supporters to take action on policy priorities; and lead AAUW voter education and turnout campaigns in their states. SPPCs are AAUW’s eyes and ears on the ground and in state houses, providing key information on legislative activity and advocacy efforts that inform the national strategy on such priority issues as equal pay and equity in education.

**Responsibilities**

1. Develop and oversee the public policy and voter engagement campaigns and legislative agenda for your state, with strategic guidance from the AAUW national public policy staff.
2. Mobilize AAUW members and supporters in your state to take action on priority AAUW issues and recruit them to join public policy committees. You can’t do it all yourself — recruit others to help you!
3. In consultation with your state board:
* Identify, monitor and advance state legislation in line with AAUW’s Public Policy Priorities.
* Create and manage the public policy and voter engagement program for your state.
* Integrate advocacy efforts with the AAUW strategic plan and other state priorities, including membership, diversity, programming, leadership and visibility.
1. Spearhead participation in strategic statewide coalitions to advance AAUW Public Policy Priorities.
2. Cultivate and communicate consistently with branch public policy chairs (BPPCs) to support their efforts in planning advocacy and voter engagement actions.
3. Grow the number of [Action Network](https://www.aauw.org/act/two-minute-activist/) subscribers in your state.

**Working with Your State**
Many SPPCs are members of their AAUW state board of directors. If this is the case in your state you should make a point to attend state board meetings. If a board position doesn’t already exist for you, please speak with your AAUW state president about creating one. You may also be required to serve on other committees as assigned. Many states have a collaborative approach to identifying a legislative agenda, incorporating the state board of directors, a specific policy committee, and/or branch public policy chairs. Prior to taking a public position or action on new state legislation, ensure you follow your state policy for approval.

You are also responsible for disseminating information about policy actions and developments to branch public policy chairs (BPPCs) and members in your state. Many SPPCs write and publish regular advocacy updates in their state newsletters to accomplish this goal. Attendance at your state’s conventions is typically required, and attendance at other regional and national conferences or events is strongly encouraged.

**Working with Branches and Branch Public Policy Chairs in Your State**
As an SPPC one of your main responsibilities is to recruit and mentor branch public policy chairs (BPPCs). BPPCs are instrumental in organizing AAUW branch members and supporters to effect change at the local, state, and federal levels. The information on page 8 will help you understand the BPPC role and explain it to members interested in the position, as well as provide advice on interacting with branches. Feel free to provide the job description to members who want to learn more about the position, and make sure all current BPPCs have the job description as well.

In addition to recruiting and coordinating with BPPCs, SPPCs should encourage and support branches in building local coalitions, promoting AAUW’s public policy agenda, driving advocacy actions, and leading voter engagement campaign efforts. It is critical that SPPCs maintain regular contact with the BPPCs. See page 14 for some tried-and-true planning strategies.

**Promoting Branch Public Policy Activity**
Be an ambassador to raise awareness and encourage engagement. In addition to maintaining contact with branches through your state communications network, consider visiting each branch in your state at least once during your tenure as state public policy chair or dividing these visits with other members of the state board. Speaking about public policy issues at branch meetings, answering questions, and sharing resources can help bring home the importance of the issues at stake to AAUW. You should also encourage branch public policy chairs to set aside a few minutes at each meeting to discuss a new issue and the corresponding action that should be taken. If you’re unable to meet in person, consider setting up a conference call, Zoom meeting, or FaceTime chat to virtually “visit” branches.

Designate legislative district chairs. State public policy chairs should work with branch public policy chairs to identify individuals in each state and congressional district who will be responsible for making appointments to meet with their elected officials to discuss AAUW federal policy priority issues. These individuals — whether BPPCs themselves or other branch members, national members, or student associates — must be constituents of the senator or representative in question and should be willing to contact their elected officials on a regular basis. Contact AAUW national public policy staff if you would like help on strategic advice, talking points and resources for in-district visits.

Schedule outreach calls to the branch public policy chairs. Consider scheduling monthly or quarterly conference calls and regular one-on-one calls with BPPCs across the state. Use the calls to celebrate your state’s recent successes and share information and resources to help with upcoming activities. Use the one-on-one calls to learn more about each branch’s programs and projects, the challenges they may be facing and what you and AAUW national public policy staff can do to help.

Include the branch public policy chairs in planning efforts. The BPPCs can be an excellent resource when mapping out your state’s policy goals and drafting plans for grassroots advocacy actions. The more BPPCs are involved in the planning phase, the more likely they will be to participate in taking action to achieve those goals.

Add a public policy breakout session to your state meeting or convention agenda. State meetings, conventions, and retreats are perfect places to talk about your public policy goals and take action because you already have everyone in one place. Consider asking an experienced branch public policy chair (or two!) to lead the session with you.

**Working with your AAUW National Public Policy Staff**

The AAUW national public policy team is here to support and strengthen your advocacy efforts. Keep us in the loop by sharing your state’s legislative agenda, joining monthly SPPC calls, and sharing information about your work.

As AAUW’s eyes and ears on the ground, identify policy priorities and implement opportunities for action in your state. While state legislative advocacy is driven at the state level, the national office provides free tools (BillTrack50) to track on state legislation and can provide some support with action alerts to mobilize Action Network subscribers in your state on top-tier issues.

State Public Policy Chairs can request state-specific Action Alerts on a limited list of topics with the help of AAUW policy staff. (Note: These alerts are sent specifically to individuals in your state who have signed up for the Two-Minute Activist tool, and not necessarily to all members.) The guidelines and templates for this process will be in the SPPC shared drive.

If you have the opportunity talk with members of Congress, in a meeting, on a coalition call, at a town hall event, please fill out the [interactions form](https://aauw.quorum.us/log/) so AAUW national public policy staff can track our interactions and follow up if needed. You can also use the [event report-back form](https://www.aauw.org/resources/policy/advocacy-toolkit/aauw-advocacy-event-and-activity-report-back-form/) for state and branch events.

The public policy team is also available to join state calls on an ongoing basis. You can also request participation at your state events by filling out the [speaker request form](https://www.aauw.org/resources/member/governance-tools/state-branch/request-a-speaker/).

## **Branch Public Policy Chair Responsibilities**

It’s an exciting and important time to be an AAUW branch public policy chair (BPPC). As a BPPC you are instrumental in driving advocacy strategy and organizing AAUW members and supporters to have an impact at the local, state, and federal levels. For your reference, here’s the job description for your role.

**AAUW Branch Public Policy Chair Job Description**
BPPCs advocate AAUW’s[Public Policy Priorities](https://www.aauw.org/resources/policy/aauw-public-policy-priorities/) to policy makers; represent AAUW’s Public Policy Priorities to AAUW members, the public, and the media; organize AAUW branch members and supporters to take action on policy priorities; and lead AAUW voter engagement campaigns for their branch. As a BPPC you may be a member of your branch board of directors and other committees as assigned. If there is not already a position for you on your branch board, ask the branch president to create one.

**AAUW BPPC Responsibilities**

1. Ensure public policy and voter engagement campaign priorities are included in your branch’s annual plan.
2. Join and participate in community coalitions that seek to advance priority AAUW issues.
3. Keep branch members and supporters updated on advocacy efforts and recruit them to take action (rallies, lobby days, in-district meetings, house meetings, letters to the editor, and more) on priority policy issues and to join the public policy committee. You can’t do it all yourself — recruit others to help you!
4. Coordinate efforts with your state public policy chair (SPPC) and fellow branch public policy chairs (BPPCs), including filling out the [event report-back form](http://www.aauw.org/resource/advocacy-event-activity-report-back-form/), sharing successful advocacy strategies, and participating in state and federal advocacy campaigns.
5. Contribute to the legislative monitoring process managed by your SPPC to help advance AAUW’s Public Policy Priorities.
6. Develop and oversee the public policy and voter engagement campaign activities for your branch.

**Ways to Incorporate Advocacy at the Branch Level**

Whether you want to work on equal pay, paid sick days, college affordability, reproductive rights, or all of these issues, there are many ways you can raise awareness about public policy and engage your members!

Here's a short list of ideas, but the options are really endless:

* Encourage attendees at your branch's book sale to sign a petition supporting inclusive public education in your state. You can easily leave a few copies of the petition at the checkout table and have volunteers walk around the sale with copies on clipboards!
* Incorporate a public policy action, such as signing a petition or calling your elected officials, into your annual luncheon or open house. You can tie the action to the topic of discussion at the luncheon.
* Request an AAUW national public policy staff member as a speaker for your upcoming branch event or state convention.
* Invite local elected officials to speak at a "Coffee/Cocktail and Convos" event.
* Organize a group from your branch to attend a town hall meeting with your federal elected officials – and make sure to ask a question during the discussion period!
	+ U.S. senators and representatives hold town hall meetings in your area during most congressional recesses, which tend to happen around major holidays (Labor Day, Memorial Day, July 4th, and the winter and spring holidays).
	+ If you meet with members of Congress, please fill out the [interactions form](https://aauw.quorum.us/log/) so AAUW national public policy staff can track our interactions and follow up if needed. You can also use the [event report-back form](https://www.aauw.org/resources/policy/advocacy-toolkit/aauw-advocacy-event-and-activity-report-back-form/) for branch events.
* Choose a congressional district chair whowill be responsible for making appointments to meet with your members of Congress to discuss AAUW federal policy priority issues. These individuals must be constituents of the congressperson in question.

**Working with Your Branch**

As a BPPC you may be a member of your branch board of directors and other committees as assigned. If there is not already a position for you on your branch board, ask the branch president to create one. You are also responsible for helping to disseminate information about policy actions and developments to members of your branch and to nonmember supporters. Consider setting aside a few minutes at each branch meeting to discuss priority policy issues and the corresponding action that should be taken, or even including the action in the meeting itself.

**Working with AAUW National Public Policy Staff**

The AAUW national public policy staff is here to support and strengthen your advocacy efforts. Keep us in the loop by filling out the [event report-back form](https://www.aauw.org/resources/policy/advocacy-toolkit/aauw-advocacy-event-and-activity-report-back-form/). If there are questions your SPPC is unable to answer, you can contact us (remembering to copy your SPPC).

If you meet with members of Congress, please fill out the [interactions form](https://aauw.quorum.us/log/) so AAUW national public policy staff can track our interactions and follow up if needed.

## **Understanding AAUW’s Public Policy Priorities**

AAUW’s Public Policy Priorities, adopted every two years by every-member vote, establish the federal action issues on which AAUW members across the country focus their advocacy efforts and guide the work of the national public policy staff. The complete 2023-2025 Public Policy Priorities are [available online](https://www.aauw.org/resources/policy/aauw-public-policy-priorities/). They include three core areas where AAUW focuses to advance policies to:

* Support a strong system of public education that promotes gender fairness, equity, diversity and inclusivity, and to address the barriers and implicit biases that hinder the advancement of women and girls;
* Achieve economic security for all women; and
* Guarantee equality, individual rights, and social justice for a diverse and inclusive society.

States and branches should use the Public Policy Priorities to inform their advocacy efforts on state and local issues. The strength of the AAUW Public Policy Priorities is that they originate and end with the membership, and state and branch policy leaders help in this process by sharing knowledge about both the Public Policy Priorities and the members in their state or branch.

**How AAUW’s Public Policy Priorities Are Developed**

The adoption of the Public Policy Priorities is the culmination of a process involving SPPCs and many other AAUW members.

In the fall of even-numbered years the AAUW Public Policy Committee (APPC) solicits feedback from members and national public policy staff to develop proposed Public Policy Priorities based on viability, critical need, strong member support, and potential for distinctive contribution. (More about the [APPC role here](https://www.aauw.org/app/uploads/2020/06/Public-Policy-Committee-Charter-June-2020.pdf).) Once the draft is developed, it is posted online for a comment period and submission of additional proposed revisions.

The APPC then finalizes the proposed Public Policy Priorities, and the [AAUW Board of Directors](https://www.aauw.org/about/leaders/meet-the-board-of-directors/) reviews, amends as necessary and approves them before they go to the membership for a vote in the spring of odd-numbered years.

The most recent update was voted on in the spring of 2023 and the next review process will begin fall of 2024.

## **Partisan versus Political: A Guide to AAUW Advocacy**

As you know, for more than a century AAUW has influenced legislative debate on critical issues affecting women and girls: issues such as education, Social Security, sex discrimination, civil rights, reproductive health, affirmative action, pay equity, and family and medical leave. AAUW has a long-standing policy of nonpartisanship and does not endorse or oppose candidates for partisan elective office (see [AAUW Policy 301, Candidates for Public Office](https://www.aauwaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Board-Policies-June-2019-nsa.pdf)). These two traditions are not contradictory. Indeed, AAUW’s nonpartisan policy and our organization’s bipartisan membership are the main reasons for AAUW’s effectiveness in advocacy.

AAUW’s nonpartisan policy means that the organization does not endorse party-nominated candidates. However, AAUW does endorse legislation; thus we are nonpartisan, but we are not nonpolitical. AAUW has always taken political stands on the critical issues of the day, as dictated by the member-adopted Public Policy Priorities. AAUW works with policy makers from any party who cares about our priority issues and shares our goals — even if that policy maker differs with us on other facets of the AAUW Public Policy Priorities.

When members take advocacy actions in the name of AAUW, those actions must be political rather than partisan. Here are some things to keep in mind when determining if your actions are political or partisan:

**DO**

* Remain nonpartisan. AAUW does not endorse candidates in partisan races.
* Work on issues guided by our values and mission, including taking positions on ballot initiatives that are in line with AAUW’s Public Policy Priorities.
* Engage with candidates and elected officials from all major parties equally, making sure questions are phrased in a neutral manner.
* Encourage voter registration for everyone, regardless of their political persuasion.

**DO NOT**

* Expressly advocate for or endorse any particular partisan candidate.
* Encourage voter registration for a particular party.
* Share AAUW membership lists with campaigns or political parties.
* Raise funds for partisan candidates or coordinate any election activity with a campaign or political party.

The AAUW National is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and the AAUW Action Fund is a 501(c)(4) nonprofit organization. Many AAUW state-level organizations and branches have a 501(c)(4) tax status. The 501(c)(4) tax status does allow for additional political engagment, but there are rules that must be followed. Be sure to know the tax status of your branch and always check your local election laws before hosting or promoting an event.

For more detailed policies, or help determining whether your action is political or partisan, contact VoterEd@aauw.org.

# **ADVOCACY 101**

**Outlining a Year of Advocacy**

AAUW’s advocacy has made women’s voices heard from the White House to Congress to the statehouse, and your voice is needed now more than ever! AAUW has compiled a set of resources to guide members in advocating for women and girls through a variety of tactics and actions. Your role as a public policy leader includes strategizing what the next year of advocacy looks like for your state or locality and utilizing these resources to provide advocacy opportunities for your AAUW communities. The next section outlines how to make an action plan, but first let’s take a look at what the many options are.

**Take a Look at the Landscape**
Before you create an action plan for the year, you want to first take a step back and assess your public policy landscape — everything from issue areas impacting your locality to the capacity of your leadership group and membership community.

1. What are the current greatest needs in your area—both issues and support. Which policy issues are most critical? Is there a community support or leadership role lacking? Be sure to check AAUW’s [Explore the Issues](https://www.aauw.org/issues/) for information on core issues and reach out to AAUW national public policy staff if needed.
2. How do your projects correspond with existing AAUW and community programs?
3. Remember to take a look at current resources from AAUW that may prove useful to your planning process. The [AAUW Advocacy Toolkit](https://www.aauw.org/resources/policy/advocacy-toolkit/) is a central location for many of our valuable how-to guides and resources; more on that in the next section.
4. Have you taken a look at potential allies (likeminded organizations to work in coalition with)? Do your existing and potential allies represent a wide range of perspectives and backgrounds? Remember to think outside the box when it comes to potential allies. Being intentional about diverse and inclusive coalitions is essential to building community power. (Check out [AAUW’s Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Toolkit](https://www.aauw.org/resources/member/governance-tools/dei-toolkit/) for more information about bringing inclusion into our advocacy work).

**Consider Offering a Number of Opportunities**
AAUW understands that advocacy comes in many forms and people have strengths in different areas, so it’s important to provide different opportunities to meet advocates where they are. Some people are talented writers or speakers, others shine as an organizer and some might want to learn—so let’s take a look at a few core ways to engage them. You could:

1. Hold a meeting with an elected official ([how-to guide here](https://www.aauw.org/resources/policy/advocacy-toolkit/meeting-elected-officials/)). Connecting with your elected officials about AAUW issues is a great way to develop a relationship and influence the positions they take on issues important to you.
2. Organize an issue forum ([how-to guide here](https://www.aauw.org/resources/policy/advocacy-toolkit/organize-issue-forum/)) on a policy topic important to your community. Issue forums are a great way to share educational information about AAUW issues with your community and draw potential members into your branch. Whether your event takes the format of a town hall, panel discussion, virtual event, or something else, it’s a great way to engage in an open and public format.
3. Plan a letter-writing campaign ([supporting resource here](https://www.aauw.org/resources/policy/advocacy-toolkit/lte-vs-oped/)). You could pick the top issue for your area, gather AAUW resources on the topic and plan a writing campaign. Writing a letter to the editor (LTE) or an op-ed is a great way to energize branch members, promote AAUW visibility in the community, and spread the word about important issues.
4. As the election season is underway, there is a lot you can do in a nonpartisan way to support voters in your area, including holding voter registration drives, organizing candidate forums ([how-to guide here](https://www.aauw.org/resources/policy/advocacy-toolkit/organize-candidate-forum/)), providing voter education materials and working with other voter engagement organizations in your area.
	1. In the upcoming months, AAUW national will be sharing updated resources on the [AAUW Action Fund website](https://www.aauwaction.org/) with more AAUW voter engagement resources.

## **Creating an Action Plan**

An action plan outlines in detail the actions and activities you’ll use to achieve your goals. Creating an action plan at the beginning of each program year allows you to plan ahead and organize activities most effectively. It’s as simple as following these eight steps.

**Step 1: Make It a Team Effort**
As a state or branch public policy chair your job is to get others excited about public policy and advocacy, and a great way to do this is to include them in the planning. Form a small core public policy team that includes veteran members, new members and people with differing skills and expertise. Assign these members tasks to help get the planning done and to use everyone’s talents. Which resources do AAUW members bring to the table? For example, a member may have connections to a community center or might teach at a nearby college. A member may even have a connection to local media!

After outlining your plan with your core team, talk over your goals with your BPPCs. Help your branch leaders realize the potential effects of achieving these goals.

**Step 2: Be Mission Driven:**
AAUW is unique in that we have been empowering women since 1881. It’s important to measure your activities and programs against [our mission](https://www.aauw.org/about/strategic-plan/); activities should reflect who we are and appeal to our members and the broader community. If you find that your activities don’t address AAUW issues, change the activities.

This step is a great place to think about “hooks” for such action as anniversaries, holidays, national awareness days or other key dates. You probably think about hooks all the time without actually calling them that; for example, Equal Pay Day (the symbolic date when we mark how the gender pay gap impacts women) is a hook that AAUW members and our allies use for equal pay advocacy activities. For SPPCs, the list of key public policy dates contains other potential hooks to incorporate into your timeline (found on the [shared drive for SPPCs](https://aauw1.sharepoint.com/%3Af%3A/s/AAUW_Box/EnxMbXDvLfhAt1Nt7TBRimABzVMItiN0eaGwtlFyBD9DBw?e=Jxfjp2)).

**Step 3: Set SMART Goals**
Think about goals in two categories: internal goals (for example, building and engaging the grassroots in your branch, state and community and recruiting new members) and external goals (for example, changing public policy). Have a mix of internal and external goals so that you are always building grassroots capacity even if your policy goal will take some time to achieve. Goals do all of the following:

1. Identify what you want to accomplish and keep everyone focused.
2. Relate to AAUW’s mission and priorities.
3. Enable you to plan more effectively and identify the funds and resources needed.
4. Help you identify when you have “won” so you can celebrate!

Start by brainstorming problems (internal and external) that your state or branch needs to address. Then brainstorm goals that will help you address those problems. Then use [SMART goals](https://www.mindtools.com/a4wo118/smart-goals) (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound) and write down what you intend to do.

**Step 4: Develop a Road Map to Success**
You will need to develop a road map of objectives with a task list and timeline for each objective. Identify action steps, key players and a timetable for meeting your goals. Think about the following questions:

1. What needs to be done? What does my community need?
2. Who can do it?
3. When should it be done?

Determine the activities that must be completed to meet each objective, and break down each one into manageable tasks. Possible objectives and tasks to help you reach the goal mentioned above could include:

1. Asking all BPPCs to hold at least one program on a topic relevant to AAUW’s Public Policy Priorities.
2. Holding a forum at your state convention about how branches can get involved in election activities.
3. Identifying a member to be a contact person in each state or congressional district and involving them as part of a larger state public policy team.

Assign responsibility for each activity to the most appropriate individual or group. Establish timelines for the start and completion of each task and activity. Be realistic and allow some flexibility for unexpected events.

For each goal and set of objectives review the resources you have and the resources you need. Don’t forget to account for human resources (members’ and allies’ time, energy, connections, and skills), financial resources, media/public relations connections, and materials. Establish a plan for obtaining additional resources.

**Step 5: Evaluate**
Take time to regularly evaluate your progress and [evaluate your SMART goals](https://www.mindtools.com/a4wo118/smart-goals): Have you made progress? Are you reaching the number of people you intended? What evidence do you have that a project has affected participants as you had planned? If goals are not being met, be flexible and develop contingency plans to ensure your goals will be reached. You can also contact AAUW national public policy staff for help if you face particular challenges.

**Step 6: Celebrate Your Milestones**
As you complete specific tasks and meet objectives, take time to celebrate your accomplishments and recognize the individuals who helped achieve them. Send thank-you cards or emails or hold a thank-you party for your fellow AAUW members. Be sure to let the national public policy staff know about your accomplishments via email or using the [event report-back form](https://www.aauw.org/resources/policy/advocacy-toolkit/aauw-advocacy-event-and-activity-report-back-form/).

## **Advocating on Legislation**

**Federal Policy**
AAUW’s policy work underscores AAUW’s mission to advance gender equity for women and girls through research, education, and advocacy. As a nonpartisan organization, we interact with elected officials and relevant government agencies to further this mission.

**AAUW national public policy** **staff engagement with federal policy**: The national office leads on federal policy issues, taking direction from the Public Policy Priorities to make guided decisions on where and how to engage. This includes:

* **Grassroots lobbying:** Action alerts (via the Two-Minute Activist tool) prioritize viable legislation at an actionable stage and create a quick process to mobilize our AAUW communities to contact their elected officials with template letters on our position. Grassroots work also includes activities like Letter to the Editor campaigns and other actions that build a groundswell of support for AAUW issues to influence decisionmakers.
* **Coalition work**: We benefit from the expertise on specific policy issues by working with coalition partners. Through this work, AAUW signs on to joint letters and comments to Congress and the Administration. (You can find a list of AAUW National’s letters, comments, testimonies and briefs [here](https://www.aauw.org/resources/policy/documents/).) We strive for our work to be inclusive and intersectional, collaborating with diverse allies and coalitions to achieve equity for all.
* **Media Outreach:** AAUW national public policy staff works with our Communications team to identify timely opportunities to raise visibility to our issues with the media. This may come in the form of placing opinion editorials or OpEds, having AAUW’s CEO talk to reporters about the importance of various issues as it relates to equity for women and girls, or using social media to capture the attention of lawmakers so they understand that their constituents support (or oppose) a particular issue.
* **Direct lobbying**: AAUW national public policy staff maintain relationships with elected officials and agencies to further our mission, including meetings, briefings, contributing to rulemaking and other open channels of communication to influence policy development.

**SPPC engagement with federal policy**: As crucial members of the AAUW policy team, SPPCs are kept up to date on federal policy movement and engagement opportunities, playing a key part in disseminating and amplifying actions and activities with membership.

***Remember: When you meet or interact with federal offices, please*** [***log it***](https://aauw.quorum.us/log/) ***so we can track the full picture of AAUW-federal relationships!***

**State Legislation: How to Find Bills, Take a Position, and Advance Your Priorities**
Working to pass (or stop) state legislation takes a lot of planning and coordination. But AAUW’s national public policy staff is here to help. Follow these guidelines to achieve legislative results in your state. You can also apply these steps at the branch level, checking in with your SPPC to ensure your state is speaking with one AAUW voice.

**Step 1: Determine Your Legislative Agenda**
Every AAUW state board should take positions on state legislation in accordance with the AAUW [Public Policy Priorities](https://www.aauw.org/resources/policy/aauw-public-policy-priorities/). The process looks different in each state, but ideally, your board will start by deciding on a set of key issues to prioritize for the legislative session. Many states have a collaborative approach to identifying a legislative agenda, including the state public policy chair along with a specific policy committee and/or branch public policy chairs in the strategy process.

**Step 2: Identify Legislation**
After your state board identifies the issues that you will work on for the state legislative session, it’s time to find bills that advance those priorities. There are multiple ways to identify pending legislation: talk to legislators, read the news, ask coalition members, look at social media platforms, consult your state’s legislative website and politcal blogs, or utilize your free subscription to BillTrack50. Run as an AAUW-wide platform, SPPCs have free access to the BillTrack50 subscription service to help us track state legislation. For more about BillTrack50, see below.

If you don’t see a bill that aims to accomplish the policy goals of your state, talk to coalition partners and AAUW national public policy staff to see if there are efforts to introduce legislation based on model principals for that issueand to discusshow to find a bill sponsor.

**Step 3: Understand your State’s Legislative Process**
A key part of being an effective advocate is to undertand the process. Does your state or commonwealth have a General Assembly or a State Legislature? Is your legislature bichameral (a House and Senate) or unichameral (we’re looking at you Nebraska!). Is your state in a short session or long session? How many times does a bill need to be heard or recieve a vote before it passes? What are the veto powers by the Governor?

Understanding what the process is for a bill to pass in your state means that you will have an better understanding of the likelyhood of a bill advancing in the upcoming session and when is the best time to take action. You can often find information on your state process on the state legislature’s website.

Helpful Resource:

* The [National Conference of State Legislators](http://www.ncsl.org) (NCSL) compiles information about state legislative calendars, procedures, and policies, as well as information on each state’s laws addressing nearly every policy issue. Not sure when your state’s legislature is in session or what equal pay laws are currently on the books? NCSL is a great place to start! Then follow up with AAUW national public policy staff for advice on next steps.

**Step 4: Track Legislation**
Being an effective advocate is about relationships and timing. One way to maximize your efforts is to focus your grassroots, media outreach, or lobbying efforts in advance of key times in the legislative process. In general, this means at the time a bill is introduced, before a bill hearing, and before a vote. (It can also be useful after a vote to reach out to elected officials so they know how you felt about their position!).

In order to know when these key times are, it is helpful to track specific pieces of legislation. Most states have a website that will allow you to search for past and current legislation by bill number or keyword. AAUW National also provides a free resource to all SPPCs that can help pro-actively track legislation.

* [**BillTrack50**](https://www.billtrack50.com/blog/tips-and-tricks/how-to/getting-started-guide-for-your-billtrack50-free-trial/), similar to StateNet, is a free service that allows SPPCs to monitor and manage pending legislation so they can confidently assess the impact, influence proposals, prepare for upcoming changes, and deliver meaningful information to members across the state. Our BillTrack50 liaison works with AAUW to help track and monitor pertinent pending legislation.
At the beginning of each year, SPPCs will receive an email with login information and training. AAUW national public policy staff and our BillTrack50 liaison can help customize search queries and alerts. SPPCs will have the ability to add BPPCs to their state group or share pertinent information with BPPCs as necessary.

**Step 5: Advocate!**
Next it’s time to come up with a strategy to advance — or stop — your priority legislation. Consider whether you would like to contact your membership with engagement opportunities, provide testimony, offer amendments, stage a rally, visit your legislators, or participate in another activity. AAUW national public policy staff can help you plan and execute your strategy.

## **Planning for Voter Engagement**

AAUW is dedicated to making sure every woman is registered and has the information she needs to cast her vote. Policy leaders can expect a more detailed manual for voter engagement in the coming months. Below are a few tips and resources to help your branch run successful voter engagement campaigns, including voter registration and voter education in your state or locality.

First, a few rules. Election activities carried out in AAUW’s name must be conducted within the guidelines set out in AAUW policies. Activities must also be allowable under regulations established by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service and the Federal Election Commission. Below is a short summary of the AAUW board policies that pertain to election activities.

**Guidelines for Election Activities**

AAUW branches and state organizations may conduct election-related activities, as long as

1. The activities do not expressly advocate the election or defeat of any clearly identified partisan candidate or political party, and
2. The preparation for and conduct of the election-related activities are not coordinated with any candidate or political party.

AAUW branches and state organizations may do the following:

* Focus issue education messages and get-out-the-vote activities on the impact that the election results will have on AAUW priority issues. Those messages or activities must not expressly advocate the election or defeat of any candidate or party.
* Encourage voters to support unspecified candidates who agree with AAUW’s position on specific issues. For example, a branch or state can publish a “vote pro-choice” message. The message cannot appear, however, in a publication that gives candidates’ views on reproductive rights.
* Identify particular groups in the community (e.g., women, people of color, people with disabilities) to be part of coalition efforts or to receive election materials. Decisions about which groups to work with should be based on factors such as the desire to build a broad-based coalition, not on whether an anticipated coalition member can affect the outcome of an election.
	+ Any political action committee or organization that has endorsed a candidate cannot be asked to be a coalition member in an AAUW voter education or voter turnout campaign. Acting as private citizens, individual AAUW members may endorse candidates for partisan elective office, contribute money or anything of value to such candidate(s), and organize for supporting such candidate(s). Such endorsement, contribution, or organizing activity cannot use the name of AAUW. Any AAUW member who is actively involved in a candidate’s campaign should avoid participating in activities that may give the appearance of AAUW’s endorsement of the candidate.

**Tips and Resources**

Familiarize yourself with [AAUW’s guide for election activities](https://www.aauwaction.org/get-out-the-vote-dos-and-donts/) for a legally-compliant campaign. (More on this also in the Board of Directors section.)

* AAUW’s [Voter Registration Guide](https://www.aauwaction.org/voter-registration/virtual-voter-registration-drives/) to design an impactful voter registration drive.
* Foster discussion and prioritization of AAUW’s issues by [planning a candidate forum](https://www.aauwaction.org/voter-registration/virtual-candidate-forum-guide/).
* Incorporate critical voter education resources into relevant events, including the AAUW [Voter Issue Guide](https://www.aauwaction.org/voter-education/voter-issue-guide/) and the [Congressional Voting Record](https://www.aauwaction.org/voter-education/congressional-voting-record/).
* Utilize the [Head-to-Head Voter Guide templates](https://www.aauwaction.org/voter-education/voter-guides/) to offer critical information on where candidates stand on AAUW issues.
* Master how to [Get Out the Vote Using Social Media](https://www.aauwaction.org/voter-registration/get-out-the-vote-using-social-media/) with our tips and tricks for turning out voters on Election Day.
* Especially if considering making events virtual and wanting to revisit how the past three years have impacted voter engagement, watch the past webinar [Voter Education & Access During the COVID-19 Crisis.](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T0fohfBY9Fo&feature=emb_logo)

## **Additional Advocacy Resources**

**Webinars**
AAUW has hosted a wide variety of webinars over the years, many focused on advocacy issues that can guide you in advocating for women and girls through a variety of tactics and actions. Use these resources to familiarize yourself with tried-and-true techniques, explore issues on a deeper level, or train new members and leaders who want to get involved in advocacy. (Recordings of all AAUW webinars and trainings are here.) Some key webinars include:

**Advocacy Activities**

* [Political and Nonpartisan](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rI_PmhMcclo&list=PLTL0yfGgwGXMyK_sroxeiKh4StRXtW3aN&index=2), a core webinar reviewing highlights of AAUW's proud non-partisan, yet very political, history. This also offers how members can develop current AAUW priorities and how you can advocate those positions going forward.
* [How to Engage with Elected Officials](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ku_umqE6f2c), to help prepare you for meeting with officials at any level.
* [Effective Advocacy During COVID-19](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n0PyD2fmY6I&list=PLTL0yfGgwGXMyK_sroxeiKh4StRXtW3aN&index=23) (and Beyond), an early discussion of how to safely fight for communities impacted by the health crisis and continuing key advocacy campaigns virtually, reviewing many of the advocacy opportunities still employed today.

**Issue Areas**

* [Celebrating 50 Years of Title IX](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9McnUKuGQ5I&list=PLTL0yfGgwGXMyK_sroxeiKh4StRXtW3aN&index=2), an anniversary celebration and historical review highlighting AAUW’s role leading up to the passage of Title IX and advancements since.
* [Exploring Tough Policy Issues Through an AAUW Lens: Title IX and Transgender Student Rights](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZE-jWtEkt4I&list=PLTL0yfGgwGXMyK_sroxeiKh4StRXtW3aN&index=2), discussing Title IX and the myths vs. facts of transgender student athlete participation in women’s sports.
* [Exploring Tough Policy Issues Through an AAUW Lens: The Student Debt Crisis](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hPWifeWSj1M&list=PLTL0yfGgwGXMyK_sroxeiKh4StRXtW3aN&index=4), discussing the realities and possible misconceptions about student debt.
* [Social Justice: Creating Change](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oNRlaMY3GuQ), where members of AAUW’s inclusion and Equity Committee talk about the important of AAUW’s role in creating change and highlighting resources for states and branches in the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Toolkit.

**Electoral Discussions**

* [The Importance of the Well-Informed Voter in 2022](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RK4x9064mMY&list=PLTL0yfGgwGXMyK_sroxeiKh4StRXtW3aN&index=2), a discussion on the 2022 midterm elections, including the presentation of key AAUW Action Fund resources.
* [Social Media Advocacy 101](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zNGoT8Ce078&list=PLTL0yfGgwGXMyK_sroxeiKh4StRXtW3aN&index=17), to explore best practices and resources for issues-based outreach to get out the vote and beyond.
* [Voter Access & Education During the COVID-19 Pandemic](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iJIaiDCSCBs&list=PLTL0yfGgwGXMyK_sroxeiKh4StRXtW3aN&index=26), an early discussion of the pandemic’s impact on voter access, key “get out the vote” and voter education resources, and a review of priority policy issues facing women and families in 2020.

**AAUW Policy Center** — AAUW compiles current information and advocacy resources on issues related to our Public Policy Priorities to offer the freshest information and most effective avenues for action. Find this information on our [website](https://www.aauw.org/act/policy-center/), where many of them can easily be printed for use at tabling events, in-district meetings, and other events.

***AAUW Action Fund Congressional Voting Record:*** The voting record informs AAUW members of the positions their U.S. Senators and Representatives have taken on AAUW’s federal legislative priorities. Copies of current and past voting records are on the [AAUW Action Fund website](http://www.aauwaction.org/voter-education/congressional-voting-record).

**AAUW Action Network Facebook Page (**[**https://www.facebook.com/aauwaction**](https://www.facebook.com/aauwaction)**)**

You can find social media posts in support of our public policy work on the AAUW Action Fund Facebook page. This page includes links to Two-Minute Activist pages, and information about national coalition actions supported by AAUW on a range of issues. The AAUW national public policy staff have already done the writting, you can ask just share these posts directly to your Facebook pages.

# **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

## **Board of Directors Policies**

The following sections contain excerpts from the [AAUW Board of Directors Policy Book](https://www.aauwaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Board-Policies-June-2019-nsa.pdf) or summaries of important sections.

Note: In all AAUW policies the term “AAUW” refers to the nationwide organization.

**Use of Name and Logo: AAUW Policy 110**
The use of the AAUW name implies an affiliate relationship with AAUW that confers certain legal rights and responsibilities on behalf of AAUW and its members and affiliates. Use of the AAUW name and/or logo requires that all members and affiliates comply with all applicable AAUW, state, and federal regulations including but not limited to signing and submitting to AAUW the AAUW Affiliate Agreement, updated bylaws, organizational documents, and all other documents required by law.

**I. AAUW Authorizes Certain Limitations to Use of Name**

1. The policies, procedures, and program of AAUW shall be binding on all members and AAUW affiliates and no member or AAUW affiliate shall use AAUW’s name to oppose such policies, procedures, or program. Established procedures may be used to change a policy, procedure, or program.
2. The freedom of speech of the individual member to speak a personal opinion in the member’s own name is not abridged.

**II. Sanctions for Misuse of Name**
Sanctions for misuse of name, including loss of AAUW affiliation, may be imposed by the AAUW Board of Directors.

**III. Use of Name Guidelines for Legislative Action**
Members and affiliates are strongly encouraged to support at local, state, and national levels measures that implement the AAUW Public Policy Priorities and principles of AAUW and AAUW affiliates. Members and/or affiliates may choose not to support such measures, but they may not use the name of AAUW in public opposition to those measures. Established procedures may be used to make changes in the AAUW Public Policy Priorities.

**Collaborations with Other Organizations: AAUW Policy 600**
This policy is to be read in conjunction with Fundraising Policy 501. **Section II is applicable only to AAUW affiliates, not to AAUW national.**

I. AAUW recognizes the value of collaborating with other organizations, nonprofit and otherwise, to raise awareness of issues and/or achieve common objectives. Such efforts can often assist AAUW to further its mission, make more effective and efficient use of its resources, and increase its visibility and impact.

II. All activities, structures, and implementing documents of affiliates must protect both the reputation and the assets of AAUW.

1. Commonly used terminology in this regard includes a variety of terms, such as “coalition,” “alliance,” and “collaboration,” which have somewhat different connotations. (For convenience, “collaboration” is used herein to encompass all such arrangements.) Subject to the exception for “partnering,” “partner,” and “partnership” noted immediately below, AAUW generally will not be concerned about the label that an affiliate chooses to use.
2. Although it is common for nonprofit organizations to be described as “partnering” with other organizations, there are certain legal ramifications that may adversely affect the affiliate because of its use of the term “partnering.” Any use of the term “partner,” or variations of the term, whether as a verb, a noun, or an adjective, imply that a “general partnership” has been created. The law provides that general partnerships can be created orally, casually, and without the parties involved realizing the implication of their actions. Even without authorization, that means every general partner can bind the partnership with respect to third parties, and every partner is liable for all of the debts, actions, and liabilities of the partnership. Accordingly, absent unusual circumstances, AAUW will not allow its affiliates to be described as partnering, being a partner, or being in a partnership or partnering relationship, and no AAUW affiliate shall have the right, power, or authority to create a partnership involving AAUW (that is, using the national organization’s name). Indeed, in many cases it will be appropriate for the affiliate to expressly record that all parties recognize that no partnership exists.

III. When working with other organizations AAUW and its affiliates will retain the control of the use of the names “American Association of University Women,” “AAUW,” and all associated logos and other AAUW intellectual property.

IV. Depending upon the circumstances and goals, collaborations can and will vary greatly with respect to the length of the relationship, the type of support provided, the leadership structure, and the appropriate level of formality and documentation, particularly with respect to financial matters. Some collaborations by AAUW and/or its affiliates with non-AAUW organizations may require AAUW Board of Directors approval, though typically decisions about the need for and advisability of such collaboration will be made by national staff.

V. Collaborations by AAUW and/or its affiliates usually includes the mutual encouragement of actions or programs of social benefit and/or mutual support of advocacy positions; therefore, such collaborations typically do not involve actual direct or indirect investment by AAUW or an affiliate. In some cases, however, AAUW’s or an affiliate’s collaboration may involve direct or indirect financial or in-kind resource investment. Such direct support may include sharing of administrative costs and/or a commitment to participate in the ongoing financial support of the common objective. It is essential that any financial or in-kind investment by AAUW or an affiliate in any collaboration must specifically (1) further the AAUW mission, (2) involve active AAUW or affiliate participation, and (3) be fully described by written and signed agreement of the parties, with clearly stipulated parameters for expenditures and participation time frames.

1. Indirect support may include staff or volunteer time, use of space, technical expertise, or use of AAUW or affiliate resources. Typically, the terms of such activities should be articulated in writing by an agreement among the parties.
2. Any investment by AAUW and/or an affiliate, whether indirect or direct, financial, or in-kind, may be made only for politically nonpartisan activities and with politically nonpartisan collaborators.

VI. AAUW affiliates may collaborate with organizations in a manner that clearly advances AAUW’s mission and purpose. In all cases, each affiliate must (1) follow its own established policies and procedures, (2) comply with all applicable laws, including tax laws, and (3) avoid creating or allowing confusion between itself and the AAUW national organization. If there is a question regarding whether a proposed collaboration is appropriate, AAUW affiliates should contact connect@aauw.org for proper referral.

VII. AAUW encourages all AAUW affiliates to support women and girls in their local communities, states, and regional areas by engaging in actions that directly relate to AAUW’s mission of advancing equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, philanthropy, and research. Participation in collaborations at these levels may help to generate local enthusiasm and visibility, promote AAUW, and recruit members. In all cases, however, no affiliate should ever state or imply that it is acting on behalf of AAUW or any other AAUW affiliate in any way that might legally obligate AAUW or any other affiliate with respect to any collaboration, duty, or action. Moreover, as discussed above, each affiliate should be careful to protect itself by not entering into partnerships, either intentionally or unintentionally.

**Election Activities: Summary of Policies**
Election activities carried out in AAUW’s name must be conducted within the guidelines set out in AAUW policies. Activities must also be allowable under regulations established by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service and the Federal Election Commission.

AAUW is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and the AAUW Action Fund is a 501(c)(4) nonprofit organization. Any branch or state that has not filed to be separately incorporated as a 501(c)(3) organization falls under AAUW’s 501(c)(4) status. Certain AAUW policies prohibit 501(c)(3) organizations from undertaking some activities that are legally permissible for 501(c)(4) organizations.

Note: Election activity guidelines for state and local races sometimes differ from those found in federal regulations. To determine state and local regulations for partisan and nonpartisan races, including school boards, check with your state elections division.

**Guidelines for Election Activities**
**AAUW branches and state organizations may conduct election-related activities as long as**

1. the activities do not expressly advocate the election or defeat of any clearly identified partisan candidate or political party, and
2. the preparation for and conduct of the election-related activities are not coordinated with any candidate or political party.

Acting as private citizens, individual AAUW members may endorse candidates for partisan elective office, contribute money or anything of value to such candidate(s), and organize for supporting such candidate(s). Such endorsement, contribution, or organizing activity cannot use the name of AAUW. Any AAUW member who is actively involved in a candidate’s campaign should avoid participating in activities that may give the appearance of AAUW’s endorsement of the candidate.

In sum, AAUW branches and state organizations **MAY** do the following:

1. Focus issue education messages and get-out-the-vote activities on the effect that the election results will have on AAUW priority issues. Those messages or activities must not expressly advocate the election or defeat of any candidate or party.
2. Encourage voters to support unspecified candidates who agree with AAUW’s position on specific issues. For example, a branch or state can publish a “vote prochoice” message. The message cannot appear, however, in a publication that gives candidates’ views on reproductive rights.
3. Identify particular groups in the community (for example, women, people of color, people with disabilities) to be part of coalition efforts or to receive election materials. Decisions about which groups to work with should be based on factors such as the desire to build a broad-based coalition, not on whether an anticipated coalition member can affect the outcome of an election.
	1. Any political action committee or organization that has endorsed a candidate cannot be asked to be a coalition member in an AAUW voter education or voter turnout campaign.
4. Determine and publicize the positions of candidates. In addition to voting records, the following may be used to gather and publicize information about the candidates’ positions on issues: position papers issued by candidates, public statements made by candidates, candidate questionnaires, and candidate forums. Different guidelines apply to each activity.
	1. Candidate questionnaires: All candidates running for the offices to be covered in the questionnaire must have the opportunity to participate. All questions must be phrased as neutrally as possible; language must not favor or disfavor a particular candidate. All responses received must be printed in their entirety in any publication of responses to the questionnaire. The publication of responses should include the names of all candidates to whom the questionnaire was sent, but publication may proceed even if all candidates do not respond.
	2. Candidate forums: All major party candidates for the office must be invited, and an effort must be made to ensure their participation. If only one candidate can attend and the other candidates do not send representatives, AAUW branches with 501(c)(3) status may not proceed with a forum. AAUW branches with 501(c)(4) status (most AAUW branches) may proceed in organizing regardless of how many candidates attend. (For the full set of rules pertaining to candidate forums, see AAUW Policy 301, Candidates for Public Office, in the Board of Directors Policy Book).
	3. Any publication or oral statement of the candidates’ responses to questions asked on a questionnaire or at a forum may include a statement of AAUW’s position on the issues covered, as long as there is no call to remember AAUW’s position when voting.
	4. **Only 501(c)(4) states and branches may publish voting records** for the state’s congressional delegation, state legislature, or other body. The voting record must include all incumbents within the district or geographic area to be covered. Its content (for example, the votes to be included) and distribution must not be coordinated with candidates.
	5. **Only 501(c)(4) states or branches may publish voter guides** that include the position of major party candidates on specific issues. The information in the voter guides must be available from public sources such as prior votes cast by candidates, position papers, or public statements made by the candidate. AAUW’s policy department provides a voter guide template on the AAUW Action Fund website.

	AAUW branch and state organizations **MAY NOT** do the following:
5. Endorse candidates in any partisan election, including local, state, congressional, gubernatorial, or presidential elections.
6. Target any voter registration efforts toward members of a particular political party or at individuals likely to vote for partisan candidates who support AAUW issues. The public must be notified by signs and in any handouts that all voter registration information is available to individuals without regard to their political preference.
7. Distribute advocacy materials as part of voter registration.
8. Distribute voter guides in conjunction with any event designed to highlight an incumbent’s or a candidate’s positions (for example, a press conference regarding how a member of Congress voted on budget cuts affecting women and families). During such events, no mention should be made of the election.
9. Coordinate any election-related activities with one or more candidates, campaigns, or political party organizations.
10. Provide membership lists to be used in raising funds or other efforts as an in-kind gift to any partisan or nonpartisan campaign. This includes AAUW email, phone, and mailing lists.
11. Use AAUW email, phone, or mail network updates to expressly advocate on behalf of a candidate who is running for partisan political office. This includes advocating financial or any other in-kind support of a particular candidate.

## **Communicating Effectively**

One of the most important duties of an AAUW policy leader is facilitating communication on public policy issues and activities with members and supporters in your state or branch. The more people know about the tools, information, and resources available to them, the more likely they are to take action. Establishing reliable, informative communication systems will help you stay connected with the members in your state or branch — making it much easier to mobilize them on advocacy issues.

**Keys to Excellent Communication**

1. **Make advocacy part of all communication.** Don’t miss an opportunity to talk about AAUW’s policy priorities! Include regular updates about your advocacy efforts in every email, newsletter or social media post to your members and supporters.
2. **Keep your messaging consistent.** Using standardized language across all of your communications will make sure your message is clear. AAUW’s [website provides quick links to our issues](https://www.aauw.org/issues/) and the [Public Policy Priorities](https://www.aauw.org/resources/policy/aauw-public-policy-priorities/) provide effective sample language for communicating about priority issues and their importance to AAUW’s mission.
3. **Distinguish internal and external communications.** Some communications are meant only for AAUW staff and member leaders while others are meant for members or the general public. Be sure to use both for maximum impact — but think strategically about what you’re sending and to whom.

**AAUW SPPC and BPPC Listservs (Email Groups)**
The public policy team maintains listservs for state and branch public policy chairs. You will automatically be added to it once you notify AAUW of your position. The lists are used to distribute announcements and advocacy resources. SPPCs and BPPCs are encouraged to share information with their fellow leaders and ask questions using these forums.

Remember—the listservs are there for you as much as AAUW. If you have an idea or question, odds are another leader has thought something similar. Email sppc@aauw.net or bppc@aauw.net to build thought sharing and collaboration with peers across state lines.

**AAUW Action Fund’s *Washington Update***
This newsletter offers opportunities to take action, learn the latest news on AAUW priority issues, and connect with other resources from AAUW National. The newsletter is sent to all members and Action Network participants on the first Thursday of every month (no sign-up necessary).

**AAUW Action Network (Two-Minute Activists)**
The cornerstone of AAUW’s online advocacy efforts, AAUW national public policy staff sends Action Network subscribers urgent email notices to contact their members of Congress or state elected officials about legislation currently under consideration. With our Two-Minute Activist tool, it takes just minutes to make your voice heard. Anyone with an email address can subscribe on the [Two-Minute Activist page](http://www.aauw.org/what-we-do/public-policy/two-minute-activist/). State Public Policy Chairs can request state-specific Action Alerts on a limited list of topics with the help of AAUW national public policy staff. (Note: These alerts are sent specifically to individuals in your state who have signed up for the Two-Minute Activist tool, and not necessarily to all members.) The guideline and templates for this process are in the SPPC shared drive.

**AAUW Action Network Facebook Page (**[**https://www.facebook.com/aauwaction**](https://www.facebook.com/aauwaction)**)**

You can find social media posts in support of our public policy work on the AAUW Action Fund Facebook page. This page includes links to Two-Minute Activist pages, and information about national coalition actions supported by AAUW on a range of issues. The AAUW national public policy staff have already done the writting, you can ask just share these posts directly to your Facebook pages.

**State and Branch Communication Tools – websites, Facebook, emails, newsletters**
AAUW state and branch websites, Facebook pages and newsletters are other great communication tools for advocacy work. If your state or branch already has a website, check to see whether it includes a public policy page. If not, work with the person in charge of the website to create one and keep it updated with federal and state public policy alerts and advocacy resources from the AAUW site, including a link to AAUW’s [Two-Minute Activist](http://www.aauw.org/what-we-do/public-policy/two-minute-activist/) tool. If you are interested in setting up a state or branch website or if you are having trouble maintaining your existing website, AAUW can help! Visit our[Site Resources website](http://site-resources.aauw.org/) to learn more.

## **Social Media for Advocacy 101**

Social networks can help you become more visible, communicate with members, interact with other AAUW branches and AAUW national, and keep up with everything that is going on in our fight for equality for women and girls. Be sure to follow AAUW on all of our channels:

* Facebook: [AAUW National](https://www.facebook.com/AAUW.National) and [AAUW Action Fund](https://www.facebook.com/aauwaction)
* Twitter: [@AAUW](https://twitter.com/AAUW) and [@AAUWActionFund](https://twitter.com/AAUWActionFund)
* Instagram: [@AAUWnational](https://www.instagram.com/aauwnational/)
* LinkedIn: [AAUW](https://www.linkedin.com/company/aauw/)

**The Basics**

Social media is a great tool for sharing your message with diverse audiences across multiple platforms. With a well-crafted tweet or Facebook post you can raise awareness about AAUW issues and spotlight your advocacy.

1. Use relevant hashtags. Including hashtags in your social media posts allows you greater visibility. Research which issue-related hashtags are popular in your area or within your coalitions so that you can be a part of the existing conversation.
2. Use photos. Tweets with photos perform five times better than those without, and good photos are priceless on all social media platforms. Use photos from a past event or promotional materials for your upcoming opportunity to promote your message.
3. Tag AAUW, we want to help publicize your work! (When posting about election-related efforts, make sure to tag the AAUW Action Fund.) We look forward to sharing your content and recognizing your hard work.
* Facebook: [AAUW National](https://www.facebook.com/AAUW.National) and [AAUW Action Fund](https://www.facebook.com/aauwaction)
* Twitter: [@AAUW](https://twitter.com/AAUW) and [@AAUWActionFund](https://twitter.com/AAUWActionFund)
* Instagram: [@AAUWnational](https://www.instagram.com/aauwnational/)
* LinkedIn: [AAUW](https://www.linkedin.com/company/aauw/)

**More Resources**

To learn more about using social media to advance policy, get out the vote and beyond, take a look at our:

* [Social Media Advocacy 101 webinar](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zNGoT8Ce078&list=PLTL0yfGgwGXMyK_sroxeiKh4StRXtW3aN&index=17) for a broader overview of how to engage on social media and tips on crafting your message.
* [Pay Equity: Engage on Social Media](https://www.aauw.org/resources/policy/pfa-toolkit/social-media/) toolkit to learn how to support the Paycheck Fairness Act and take action on Equal Pay Days throughout the year.
* [Social media how-to guide](https://www.aauwaction.org/voter-registration/get-out-the-vote-using-social-media/) for voter engagement activities.

## **Working with the Media**

Working with the media provides a rewarding and cost-effective tool for promoting AAUW’s policy priorities and events. Your efforts can lead to new members, access to key stakeholders and decision makers, and increased visibility in your community. Reach out to advocacy@aauw.org with any questions about media outreach or AAUW issue messaging.

**Representing AAUW**
When speaking to the press about AAUW Public Policy Priorities, be sure to identify yourself as a member of your state organization or branch by name. You’re representing AAUW in your state so it’s important to be clear about your role in the organization. Make sure members do the same when speaking publicly!

 Poor: I’m Marion Talbot with AAUW.
 Good: My name is Marion Talbot and I’m with AAUW of Massachusetts.
 Great: My name is Marion Talbot, the state public policy chair for the American Association of University Women of Massachusetts.

**Planning**

1. Compile a media contact list. Identify the appropriate reporters, editors, producers, news directors and departments in your local newspapers and broadcast stations that focus on AAUW priority issues and are likely to be interested in AAUW’s news.
2. Set a time frame with clear goals. Make sure your media strategy reflects the amount of time available and feasible and takes into account legislative session dates.
3. Determine your key message. Who is your intended audience, and what do you want them to take away from the potential story about your issue or event?
4. Tailor your pitch. Make sure you know key information about the reporter’s beat (what they report on), title, phone number and email, and keep in mind the goals and audiences of the outlet you’re approaching.