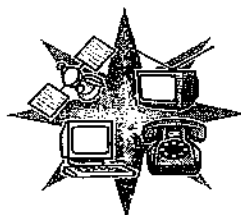


CHAPTER TWO: STATE COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH TO BRANCHES

- ◆ State Communication Strategies
- ◆ Promoting Branch Public Policy Activism
- ◆ AAUW Branch Public Policy Chair Job Description



State Communication Strategies

Facilitating communication within your state on public policy issues and activities is among the most important duties of an SPPC. Your job as SPPC will be much easier with good state communication. While many states already have excellent communications systems in place (e.g., websites, listservs or e-mail lists, telephone trees, etc.) in place, some are still building these lists and connections. Whatever the status of your state's communications capabilities, there is always room for improvement and growth. While initially creating a communications infrastructure can be time-consuming, easy access to information will save time and effort later.

Getting started—create lists!

To make communication easier, create lists of individuals with whom you will frequently need to be in contact. Compile all available information, including address, phone and fax numbers, and e-mail addresses. Consider making lists for the following groups:

- branch public policy chairs
- state board
- state public policy committee
- regional directors
- AAUW public policy staff
- coalition partners
- media contacts (see chapter five for more information)
- your congressional delegation

Communication networks made easy

Once you have all the necessary contact information at your fingertips, the next step is to establish a communications network—a means of reaching these groups of people with minimal effort. A phone, fax, or e-mail system will cut down on the number of calls, letters, and alerts you have to send.

Electronic mail (e-mail)

E-mail is the easiest, fastest, and least expensive way to receive or send current information and reach large numbers of people. As SPPC, it is *vital* that you have access to e-mail, and you should also work to ensure that each branch has at least one e-mail-accessible member—preferably the branch public policy chair—to whom you can send policy information and alerts, and who will be responsible for spreading the word to other branch members. By establishing a statewide e-mail list or listserv, you will be able to contact every list subscriber by sending a single e-mail.

Access to e-mail and setting up an account

For those without fax or e-mail access at home, there are many businesses such as local copy shops and drug stores that allow people to receive faxes or send and receive e-mail for a small fee. Public libraries are another place that people can go to use computers and send and receive e-mail for free. In addition, local colleges and universities usually have e-mail access for students and faculty. Once you have access to a computer, e-mail accounts are easy to set up. There are many websites that allow users to set up free e-mail accounts quickly and easily, such as www.juno.com, www.yahoo.com, and www.hotmail.com.

Listservs

E-mail listservs are the easiest way to facilitate communication among a group of people. While listservs come in many different forms, all have two fundamental functions: storing the e-mail addresses of all subscribers to the mailing list, and automatically delivering messages sent to the listserv address to all list members. Although listservs require a list manager—someone who is responsible for overseeing general operation—they overcome a fundamental barrier faced by simple email lists which rely on copying and pasting lists of e-mail addresses into the “to” or “cc” lines of messages. When the mail list is housed in one member’s e-mail address book, it is difficult for others to access the list, and that one member becomes responsible for facilitating communication. Even worse, if that person’s computer crashes, the list could be lost.

It is easy to set up your own listserv through free services such as Yahoo groups. To learn more about how to establish your own listserv group, visit <http://help.yahoo.com/help/groups/>. For more information, About.com offers a series of articles on mailing lists that discusses types of lists, using lists, and creating your own. Just visit http://email.about.com/library/series/blmailinglists_series.htm

If you have questions about how to set up a statewide e-mail list, contact the public policy office at 800/608-5286 to receive technical assistance.

AAUW Branch Public Policy Listserv

On May 1, 2002, the Public Policy Department launched the first-ever listserv available to branch public policy leaders. The listserv, which is announcement-only (subscribers will receive information, but will not be able to send information to the list), is open to anyone who is interested in public policy, and completely voluntary for members and states. List members subscribe themselves and receive public policy alerts and information on federal issues from the Public Policy Department. State public policy leaders already receive this information via mailings and the public policy leaders’ listserv, which does allow for discussion and interaction.



Be Tech Savvy!

Whether you are a new or a long-time e-mail user, understanding how to more effectively and easily reach others by setting up and participating in e-mail lists, and learning e-mail etiquette will help you get the most out of this invaluable communication tool.

Use the Resources in chapter three of this manual to learn more about e-mail etiquette (netiquette), listserv etiquette, and avoiding pitfalls like hoaxes and viruses.

The new listserv is optional and designed to complement, not replace, the information and infrastructure that SPPCs establish at the state level. As SPPC, the advertisement and use of this listserv is at your discretion.

If you do choose to make use of the BPPC listserv in your state, there are a variety of ways that states can choose to use this new resource, here are just a few examples:

- **Encourage all members of your state listserv to subscribe** so that they will receive alerts on federal legislation through the Association and you can focus your state list on discussion of these issues and dissemination of state information.
- **Advertise the availability of the list to members-at-large**, and other members in your state who are interested in the AAUW's public policy work, but might not be ready to be a part of your state list.
- **Make the new list available in the same ways as you do *Get the Facts***. Help make potential new members aware of AAUW's public policy priorities by distributing instructions for subscription to coalition partners and the public at your public policy events.

It is our hope that the new list will serve to make your jobs easier, reach members who are not receiving public policy information, and promote a sense of connection among branches around the country and the Public Policy Department. Instructions for subscription to the new list are included below, and a flier for distribution is included in the Appendix of this manual.

Instructions for subscription to the Branch Public Policy Leaders' Listserv

To join the new Branch Public Policy Leaders' Listserv:

1. Address an e-mail to LISTSERV@ELISTS.AAUW.ORG.
2. Type **SUBSCRIBE BRANCHPOLICY** (note: no space between branch and policy) in the body of the message.
3. Send.
4. Once the AAUW server receives your subscription request it will respond to you with directions to confirm your subscription. Just follow the cues and your subscription will be completed.

Questions? Contact the AAUW Public Policy Department at 800/608-5286 or votered@aauw.org

Broadcast Fax System

A Broadcast Fax System can also be an effective means of communicating with large numbers of people if they have access to a fax machine. Staff can provide you with a list of e-mail and/or fax information for *Get the Facts* recipients in your state. To expand your lists, ask all recipients in your state if they would like to be a part of your network. It's also a good idea to ask coalition partners if they are interested in being included, and to ask them to add you to their e-mail lists.

HELPFUL HINTS FOR E-MAIL AND FAX NETWORKS

- Spot check your system to make sure it is working and frequently update your contacts.
- Remind members regularly to update you with any changes in their contact information.

III. Telephone Tree

A telephone tree can be set up to start with one caller and then branch out across the network with each participant calling one other person. Another model uses a limited number of callers, each calling a large number of people such as one page in the directory or 5-10 names from a list. The phone tree system takes more time and is often less effective than e-mail or fax systems, but can still be an important resource. In many cases you may need to use a combination of e-mail, fax and phone trees to reach members in your state.

HELPFUL HINTS

- Create a "chain" list with contact names and phone numbers.
- Distribute the list to all members of the network.
- When important information arises, call the first person on the list. Convey the information and the action needed and remind them to call the next person on the list. If you or subsequent callers reach an answering machine or have to leave a message with someone other than the intended network member, call the next number on the list to ensure that the network continues.
- Regularly update contact information.



State and Branch Websites—AAUW has Resources to Help!

State websites are another great communications tool. If you are interested in setting up a branch or state website, AAUW can help. The AAUW website contains style information, templates and instructions to assist you in getting your site up and running. Just visit: www.aauw.org or see appendix.

If your state already has a website, check to see whether it includes a public policy page or section. If not, work with the webmaster to create one and keep it updated with federal and state public policy alerts, and links to position papers and information on the Association site, www.aauw.org.



Promoting Branch Public Policy Activism

Promoting branch public policy activity on state and federal AAUW priority issues is one of your most important responsibilities as SPPC. There are many ways that you can raise awareness about public policy and encourage branches in your state to make it a priority.

Make sure that each branch public policy chair (BPPC) job description sheet that will help them identify their key responsibilities and set goals for their branch's activities. The BPPC job description is included in this section, and is also available electronically through the AAUW Public Policy Department.

Ensure that each branch has access to e-mail alerts, either through the BPPC or, if that is not possible, another branch member charged with receiving and distributing e-mailed public policy information.

Be an ambassador. In addition to keeping in contact with branches via your state communications network, consider visiting each branch in your state at least once during your tenure as SPPC, 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 really help bring the importance of the issues at stake home to AAUW members.

Schedule outreach calls. Consider scheduling quarterly or biannual phone calls with branch public policy chairs across the state, particularly those with whom you have had minimal contact. Use these "check-in" calls to learn more about the branch's programs and projects, the challenges they may be facing, and what you and public policy staff can do to help. To set the tone, consider sending a note to BPPCs in advance of your call letting them know that you are looking forward to talking with them and listing a few questions or topics you hope to discuss.

Encourage BPPCs to read *Action Alert*. At least one member of each branch, preferably the BPPC, should access *Action Alert* free online via the Member Center at www.aauw.org, or subscribe to receive the printed version for a fee of \$20 a year. *Action Alert* is the best way for branches to be aware of where AAUW priority issues stand in Congress. An *Action Alert* subscription form is included in the appendix of this manual and is available online at <https://www.aauw.org/takeaction/actionalert/apply.cfm>.

Share resources and ideas. There are many ways that BPPCs can raise public policy awareness and activity in their branches, from setting aside a few minutes at each meeting to discuss an issue and action, to visiting members of Congress and attending their town meetings when they are home in the district. Use your experience and the resources available through the Public Policy Department to help make it as easy as possible for BPPCs to incorporate public policy activism in their branch's activities.

AAUW Branch Public Policy Chair Job Description

Key Goals

- Implement action on AAUW's legislative program.
- Represent AAUW public policy priorities to elected and appointed officials, AAUW members, the public, and the press.

Gather and Share Information

- Work closely with your state public policy chair(s) (SPPC).
- Ask your SPPC to place you on state public policy distribution lists.
- Subscribe to AAUW legislative alerts and newsletters, *Get the Facts*, and *Action Alert*.
- Disseminate AAUW public policy and voter education information at branch meetings.
- Develop a local communication network of branch members and coalition partners through telephone, e-mail, and fax networks to distribute timely public policy information.

Encourage Activism

- Ensure that public policy and voter education are priorities in branch goals and strategic plans.
- Develop a public policy team to plan and implement branch and inter-branch activism.
- Provide public policy training at branch meetings.
- Join and spearhead diverse community coalitions to work on AAUW public policy priorities.

Branch Board Responsibilities

- Work with members to integrate public policy and voter education activities with other aspects of AAUW including membership, diversity, program, and visibility.
- Establish a public policy budget to meet financial needs for communication with branches, participation in coalitions, communication with elected officials, and other initiatives.
- Provide Association with input pertaining to AAUW public policy priorities through completion of the Every-Member Survey.

Find and Take Positions on State and Local Issues

AAUW states and branches may take positions on issues that are not current public policy priorities at the federal level, providing that these issues or positions are not in conflict with AAUW's public policy principles. Before using the name of AAUW or taking a position on an issue, consult the following documents, available from the Public Policy and Government Relations Department:

- AAUW Legal Guidelines for Voter Education
- Use of Name and Logo Policy
- Policy on Candidates for Public Office
- Guidelines for Candidates for Public Office
- How the Public Policy Program is Developed
- AAUW Historic Principles

If you have any questions regarding the use of these resources, contact the Voter Education hotline at 800/608-5286 or votered@aauw.org.