



AAUW PROGRAM IN A BOX

STATEHOUSE LOBBY CORPS

AT A GLANCE

STATEHOUSE LOBBY CORPS

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Use this Program in a Box to build a Statehouse Lobby Corps to promote grassroots lobbying efforts in your state.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

AAUW state and branch organizations

PROGRAM FORMAT

Presentations and one-on-one discussions

TIME CONSIDERATIONS

Time frame: Ongoing

RESOURCES NEEDED

Staff: One Statehouse Lobby Corps coordinator and additional issue experts

Space: A meeting place for briefings

Advertising: Recruiting announcements at branch meetings and state conventions

Supplies: Pens, pencils, paper, badges, notepads

Handouts: Legislation and issue briefings, letters for legislators

Budget considerations: Costs of printing and photocopying, including briefings for volunteer lobbyists and letters to legislators

BENEFITS TO YOUR STATE, BRANCH, OR COMMUNITY

- Offers AAUW states and branches visibility as community leaders, powerful advocates for women, and effective voices in policy making
- Increases engagement and participation of AAUW members in advocating for AAUW's public policy priorities at the state and local level
- Helps make a positive effect on the legislative process for AAUW's priority issues
- Helps establish relationships with local, state, and national public officials

PROGRAM DETAILS

STATEHOUSE LOBBY CORPS

The AAUW Action Fund Capitol Hill Lobby Corps was first established to promote federal grassroots lobbying efforts by AAUW members living in the Washington, D.C., area. A Statehouse Lobby Corps, which is an adaptation of the national program, engages AAUW members in state policy making through public-policy education and grassroots advocacy. Several AAUW states and branches around the country have successfully implemented the program.

Establishing a Statehouse Lobby Corps can be as complex or simple as you wish, but the most effective grassroots advocacy efforts require an AAUW state board's long-term commitment to advocating for AAUW public-policy priority issues.

GETTING STARTED

Before you begin your efforts to establish a successful lobby corps, find out the dates your state's legislative bodies are in session. If your state legislature will not be in session for some time, you have more time to establish a coordinating committee and train lobby corps members. If your state legislature is currently in session, the new lobby corps will have plenty of opportunities to engage in advocacy immediately.

Review all of the materials in this Program in a Box before moving forward to establish a Statehouse Lobby Corps.

SETTING UP A STATEHOUSE LOBBY CORPS IN 12 EASY STEPS

1. CREATE A COORDINATING COMMITTEE

Putting together a lobby corps is best accomplished by a coordinating committee. Delegating tasks ensures that more AAUW members are included in leadership positions. Try to establish a core group of dedicated members to coordinate lobbying visits, draft issue briefings, and maintain contact with legislators and lobby corps members.

Building and maintaining an effective Statehouse Lobby Corps will take the combined efforts of a pool of engaged AAUW members. The coordinating committee keeps people involved in the process and shares the responsibility for the upkeep of the lobby corps. Lobbying visits can be done on a weekly, monthly, or other periodic basis, depending on your state's legislative schedule.

At a state convention or via e-mail, invite all persons interested in public policy or grassroots advocacy to contact you about forming a coordinating committee. Send individual notes to members who would be great for the job. Set a date for an initial meeting and try to include as many people as possible. If you live in a larger state, teleconferencing might be the most feasible option.

Some states find it helpful to use “issue experts” to form the committee so it is grounded in a strong knowledge base and so committee members have a vested interest in promoting their causes. Ask your state president or state public policy chair if she or he knows of AAUW members who have strong backgrounds in issues such as pay equity, education, or civil rights. You can also learn individual strengths and preferences at the initial committee meeting.

Let committee members know that they will be the backbone of the lobby corps. They will be responsible for maintaining communication with lobby corps members, the AAUW state president, and the AAUW national office Public Policy and Government Relations Department. Committee members will recruit and train members, initially and on an ongoing basis, and become experts about the activities of the state legislature. The committee will choose legislative issues and target legislators, and members will write briefings to inform the lobby corps about the issues they will discuss. The committee will also follow up with legislators and staff members. These tasks can be shared or divided, according to the committee’s preferences.

2. RESEARCH YOUR STATE LEGISLATURE

One of the committee’s first tasks should be to gather information about your state’s legislature. How does it function, when does it meet, which committees deal with AAUW priority issues, and how does the legislature provide up-to-date information for voters about legislation and hearings? Learn all of this information before you recruit lobby corps members so that you can provide details about the time and travel commitments involved in participating. Some state government websites can be difficult to navigate, so it might help to contact an administrator at the state capitol who can take you through the basic functions of state government for the first time.

AAUW state affiliates also have the option of setting up a system like [AAUW’s Action Network Two-Minute Activist](#) to work with state legislatures. The service features basic information such as the text, bill number, and sponsors of state legislation and allows you to write text in support of or against bills. It’s also an excellent way to find and recruit supporters. There is a cost for this service. For more information, contact the AAUW Public Policy and Government Relations Department at 202/785-7793 or voterred@aauw.org.

The state legislature’s website should help you find state senators and representatives. Make sure that committee members know how to guide lobby corps participants to this website for gathering information and making appointments. And keep in mind that the web pages of individual legislators may yield information that is just as important as what you’ll find on the state government website.

3. GAIN STATE CONVENTION OR BOARD APPROVAL

Let your AAUW state president know about your plan to form a lobby corps. Every state is different, and some may request that you present the idea at a board meeting or state convention before you are approved to represent your state or local AAUW in an official capacity.

4. ADVERTISE

Getting the word out about your Statehouse Lobby Corps is important for recruitment efforts. State conventions offer opportunities to distribute informational flyers and make presentations about the lobby corps and the commitment involved. State and branch newsletters are also a great venue. E-mail blasts sent to all branch public policy chairs, branch presidents, or all state AAUW members can be an easy way to make sure that you’re reaching all members and leaders.

College students are welcome to participate in AAUW-sanctioned grassroots lobbying efforts. College campuses usually have public posting areas available for community members to display flyers, and you should post an invitation there asking college students to join your lobbying efforts (see the sample flyer in the [tool kit](#)). If the AAUW state organization has a student advisory council, consult student members as resources for getting the word out to interested college students. If your lobby corps meets regularly, this could be an internship opportunity for a student.

After the lobby corps becomes active, distribute additional flyers to coalition partners inviting them to participate in lobby visits. The more coalition partners who attend a meeting, the more effective the message becomes.

5. TRAIN LOBBY CORPS MEMBERS

Different states train grassroots lobbyists in different ways, but most AAUW members feel more comfortable engaging in lobbying efforts after receiving some information and training in the lobbying field. Some states hold lobby-training days during state conventions so that all members know how to participate in a lobby day or in-district meetings, and interested members are able to continue these efforts (a sample training schedule is included in the [tools section](#) below). Others hold a brief training the morning that lobbying efforts begin.

The key to lobby corps training sessions is to let members know that lobbying is something that everyone can do, and already does, with parents, spouses, siblings, neighbors, and friends. Explaining your cause is something you do every day, and doing so in front of a state representative is not that different.

6. CHOOSE YOUR AAUW ISSUES

Your state legislature's website and state legislators' websites should provide information about pending legislation. It is important to have a very particular "ask" (request) that deals with a bill or resolution when lobbying a legislator, as opposed to a general request for support on a particular issue. Become familiar with [AAUW's policy principles and priorities](#) so you can recognize legislative issues that are important to the organization. These generally fall under the categories of civil rights, educational opportunity and Title IX, reproductive rights, pay equity and economic security issues, and other women's issues.

AAUW produces [position papers](#) covering issues from work-life balance to high school athletics. Consult these papers for helpful information, statistics, and additional sources on topics of interest to AAUW members. Each position paper covers an issue outlined in AAUW's member-adopted [Public Policy Principles and Biennial Action Priorities](#).

The [AAUW Federal Policy Agenda](#) explains AAUW's priority legislative and executive asks on the national level and can be helpful in guiding the search for similar state policies and choosing issues for in-district lobbying of federal public officials.

7. WRITE LETTERS AND FACT SHEETS

Once you have found legislation that falls within AAUW's policy priorities, prepare materials for lobby corps members to reference and letters to distribute to legislators and their staff. The documents designed for AAUW members are generally referred to as "briefings" or "fact sheets." A briefing is an extensive document, much of which can be gleaned from AAUW's policy papers, that provides statistics describing the problem the bill seeks to solve, information from the bill and from legislators' press releases about how the bill solves this problem,

and short talking points that will help members synthesize the information they've been given into a two-minute "elevator speech" (a speech you could give during an elevator ride). Briefings used for the D.C.-based AAUW Action Fund Capitol Hill Lobby Corps are available on the [AAUW Action Fund website](#) and can be useful in creating similar documents for your Statehouse Lobby Corps.

8. SELECT YOUR TARGETS

Targets are specific members of the state legislature or U.S. Congress who can help get a bill passed. These can be individuals who might co-sponsor the legislation due to past support of AAUW issues or persons on the fence about issues like pay equity or funding for education who, with slightly more constituent pressure and better information and statistics, would come out in support of AAUW's position. Targets should also include members of key committees and representatives of lobby corps members' districts, who are more receptive to constituents. Make a list of all legislators who represent local lobby corps members and make sure that each is visited on a lobby day. If additional legislators are needed to add more time to the lobbying excursion, add those who you know (through research of their voting records) have not publicly supported the lobby corps' legislation and could use an extra push to get behind it. Making an appointment is as easy as placing a call. When in doubt, call the legislator's office and ask for their preferred method of receiving appointment requests (fax, phone, e-mail, or web).

9. BRIEF PARTICIPANTS

Each time you plan to lobby, make sure to meet as a group for at least 30 minutes before any scheduled appointments to brief members on the issue(s) they'll be discussing with legislators. The person leading the group on a particular issue should summarize the problem the bill attempts to solve and how it proposes to solve it and give specific, simple talking points for reasons the bill should pass (or fail). Be sure to leave time for questions, and let everyone know that if they do not have answers to any question they are asked, it is perfectly acceptable to offer to get back to the person with whom they are meeting.

10. LOBBY

For an explanation of grassroots lobbying, consult How to Lobby in the [tools section](#) below.

11. FOLLOW UP WITH LEGISLATORS

Keep a running spreadsheet that includes pieces of legislation for which you lobbied during each lobby corps session, who lobbied which legislator, and what was said. To make information-gathering easier, consider giving each lobby corps member the report form (see a sample in the [tool kit](#)) so that they can provide details of each meeting.

Following up with legislators is critical, especially if the office has requested more information or had a specific question about the legislation or issue. Make sure that this information is sent to the legislator's office promptly. Ensure that those who met with a legislator send a thank-you note soon after their visit.

12. MAINTAIN RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNICATION

Even when the state legislature is not in session, maintain relationships with Statehouse Lobby Corps members and legislators. Consider hosting letter-writing parties with lobby corps members or holding legislative briefings on national or local issues so that members stay active and AAUW maintains communication and strong relationships with the state legislators whom you've visited. Inform legislators of recent AAUW press releases or research reports that may influence them to support AAUW issues.

MEMBERSHIP RECRUITMENT

Membership matters! Help grow the AAUW community by inviting prospective members to your event and encouraging them to join AAUW. Visit the [membership campaign website](#) to learn more.

If your event involves college and university faculty or students or is held on a campus, invite schools that are not yet AAUW college/university partner members to join AAUW and offer their students the benefits that go with AAUW membership. All students attending a C/U partner-member institution are eligible to join AAUW for free as e-students. For more information, visit the [college/university partner recruitment web page](#).

TOOLS

STATEHOUSE LOBBY CORPS

STATEHOUSE LOBBY CORPS TOOLS

- [AAUW's Federal Policy Agenda](#)
- [AAUW's position papers](#)
- [AAUW's principles and priorities](#)
- [How to Lobby \(see below\)](#)
- [Sample Statehouse Lobby Corps meeting report form \(in the tool kit\)](#)
- [Sample Statehouse Lobby Corps recruiting flyer \(in the tool kit\)](#)
- [Sample Statehouse Lobby Corps training schedule \(see below\)](#)

PROGRAMS-IN-A-BOX TOOL KIT

The [tool kit](#) includes forms, checklists, and templates that you can modify and adapt for your program or event.

- [Attendee sign-in form](#)
- [Photograph release form](#)
- [Press release template](#)

MEMBERSHIP RECRUITMENT TOOLS

- [Individual members](#)
- [AAUW college/university partner members](#)

CONTACTS

- For questions or information about this Program in a Box, e-mail votered@aauw.org or call 202/785-7793.

HOW TO LOBBY

STATEHOUSE LOBBY CORPS

When lobbying a legislator, speak from personal experience whenever possible. As you relay anecdotes, talk about why the issues are important. The following are a few easy pointers to ensure a successful lobby visit.

PREPARE FOR THE VISIT

- Think of personal anecdotes to speak about regarding the issues that you will be discussing with your legislator. For example, if you have had personal experience with the Social Security system, tell your story using names and examples of why or how you, your family, or your friends have relied on it.
- If you lobby with a group of people, designate a lead spokesperson before your appointment.
- Know something about the legislator before your appointment (for example, her or his voting record and position on issues or the number of AAUW members in her or his district).

DURING THE VISIT

- Introduce yourself and the group you represent.
- Try to find common ground between you and the staff or legislator.
- Prioritize your points (this is especially important if your meeting is cut short).
- Try to keep the discussion focused on your talking points.
- If you do not understand something, ask for an explanation.
- Ask the legislator or staff member to clarify her or his positions.
- Tell the legislator or staff member that you will get back to her or him about any questions that you cannot answer.
- Thank the legislator, staff, and receptionist for meeting with you.

AFTER THE VISIT

- Immediately after your visit (if possible), complete and return the lobby report form (see the [tool kit](#)) to the lobby corps coordinators so they can arrange any necessary follow-up. Note any unanswered questions or information. If you are meeting with a member of the U.S. Congress, let the national AAUW Public Policy and Government Relations Department staff know what you learned by sending an e-mail to votered@aauw.org or filling out an [online report form](#).
- Write a thank-you letter to the legislator summarizing your priority points.
- Find out when you can arrange another visit with the legislator or staff member.

SAMPLE STATEHOUSE LOBBY CORPS TRAINING SCHEDULE

STATEHOUSE LOBBY CORPS

- 9:30 A.M. WELCOME**
- Lobby corps co-chairs
- 10 A.M. INTRODUCTIONS**
- Lobby corps coordinating committee
 - Lobby corps members
 - New lobby corps participants
 - Support staff
- 10:30 A.M. LOOKING FORWARD**
- Briefing on pay equity
 - Briefing on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); education; Title IX
 - Briefing on family-friendly workplace policies
- 11:30 A.M. LOGISTICS OF LOBBY CORPS**
- Member responsibilities
 - Where to meet
 - How to dress
 - What to bring
- NOON LUNCH**
- 12:30 P.M. HOW TO LOBBY**
- Lobby corps members' role
 - Suggestions from members
 - Suggestions for members
 - How and where to learn more about AAUW's issues
 - Following up after a meeting