



Public Policy Advocacy Playbook





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AAUW Mission: To advance gender equity for women and girls through research, education, and advocacy.

AAUW Vision: Equity for all.

Values: Nonpartisan. Fact-based. Principled. Inclusive and Intersectional.

Introduction



The intention of this guide is to provide tips to improve engagement on public policy in branches of all sizes. Whether your branch is small, medium, or large, we hope you will find the information in this document to be relevant and scalable to your organization.

At a minimum, AAUW of Michigan strongly recommends that each branch have an elected or appointed person that acts as a public policy advocate. We will call this position **Public Policy Committee Chair (PPCC)** for the purposes of this document, but your branch might use a different title.

As stated in the AAUW mission, advocacy should have the active participation of all members, not just the PPCC. All members of a branch need to be ready to reach out to local/state/federal officials, and to be aware of advocacy opportunities, if the mission is to be achieved. In a larger branch, the PPCC might head a **Public Policy Committee**. In a smaller branch, the board might act as a quasi-Public Policy Committee and serve as a sounding board for the PPCC. At a minimum, the branch PPCC should be a regular participant of the monthly Lobby Corps tele-conferencing meetings. (See [Resources](#) section of this document.)

Some branches have found that having co-PPCCs work well to share the workload of the Public Policy position. Co-PPCCs can also help to ease newer members into advocacy by partnering them with a more experienced member to collaborate in the shared position. Co-PPCCs work as a team of two with their larger planning groups.

Everything a branch's Public Policy Committee does is important in sharing with members and keeping them informed and engaged. The Public Policy Committee should be sure to have advocacy tidbits (or more) included in a branch's print and digital communications, programming, community events, and philanthropic projects. The Public Policy Committee should promote a philosophy and thorough understanding so that promoting our mission statement infuses all the branch's planning and activities.

Branch PPCC Job Description

Your branch’s Public Policy Committee job description should be consistent with any information about the position found in your bylaws or policies.

Summary of Position:

The PPCC coordinates member engagement, education, and participation in local advocacy efforts.

Position Duties:

1. Provide advocacy information to members.
2. Urge members to participate in virtual Lobby Corps calls.
3. Develop an advocacy orientation process for members.
4. Coordinate advocacy efforts with fellow Lobby Corp members.
5. Using AAUW and AAUWMI priorities as a guide, the PPCC committee and branch can choose to focus on particular issues.
6. Encourage branch members to engage with local and state officials on matters that match the AAUW mission statement.
7. Assist members in setting up meetings with local officials and/or contact with state/federal officials.
8. Attend meetings with local/state/federal officials, as often as possible.
9. Debrief members after meetings with elected officials, and share as appropriate with branch members and Lobby Corps.

Remember that the PPCC is the leader and facilitator of these tasks, but other members of the branch need to support the PPCC’s efforts and collaborate as a team to be successful.

Key Calendar Dates

Advocacy is every member’s job and should happen all year long and not just during specified dates on the calendar. Note, however, that certain dates are permanent fixtures in the political calendar. The State of Michigan has elections at the beginning of May, August and November.

Michigan State Senators serve a 4-year term. The term for the Michigan House of Representatives is two years.

The “session” of the state legislature is two years, meaning that at the end of every other year, all bills have to start over. At the end of the legislative “session” in December of even years, any bill not passed out of the House and Senate will die. A bill would have to be re-introduced and



start the legislative process all over again in the new “session” starting in January.

In Michigan, state officials are elected in November of even years, with some officials serving two-year terms, and others serving 4-year terms. Also, some local cities/villages hold elections on odd years, depending on their local charter or state law. Counties and townships generally hold elections on even years, with officials serving 4-year terms. School boards and community college boards generally hold their elections with the other officials in November.

People resign from elected positions all the time, so special elections may be called at the occasional odd time. Also, there can be successful recall efforts forcing an election in a local community, but this is typically rare.

Other annual dates of particular interest to AAUW members include [Equal Pay Day](#) (date fluctuates, but has been in mid-March in recent years) and Women’s Equality Day (on August 26).

January of Odd Years

- PPCCs and interested branch members should meet with their new and re-elected local officials to familiarize the officials with the activities of the branch and AAUW’s mission.
- Prepare a list of advocacy activities for the upcoming legislative term. Reach out to other organizations about partnering for advocacy opportunities/events in Lansing, etc.

Summer

- Invite branch members to meet with state/federal officials who are now on summer recess and back at their district offices.
- Start developing ideas and planning for activities/events for any coming November election.
- Collaborate with other organizations that match AAUW’s mission.

Fall

- Follow up with elected officials to push forward issues that match AAUW’s mission.
- Educate branch members on issues/candidates that match AAUW’s mission.
- Host candidate forums (could partner with organizations like [League of Women Voters](#), [NAACP](#), local Chamber of Commerce, etc.)

Winter

- Keep branch members apprised of fast-moving legislation related to “lame duck” sessions for bills that match AAUW’s mission.
- Meet with local city/village elected officials to introduce them to your local branch and AAUW’s mission.



Advocacy Tactics

Note that most of these tactics require collaboration with members of your board and other branch members. No branch needs to incorporate all of these suggested tactics, but each branch probably needs a multi-pronged approach to its overall public policy advocacy strategy.

- Be intentional in determining your target audience and developing strategies to reach members and elected officials. Consider the demographics of your community with a view to diversity.
- Assess the advocacy strategies you have used in the past to determine if they are still effective. Reach out to other members of the Lobby Corps to brainstorm and learn of best practices other branches have used successfully.
- Promote AAUW's mission *to advance equity for women and girls* in all your branch efforts. Many people are looking for opportunities to make a difference and to join organizations that advocate for the issues that AAUW supports and represents.
- Prepare an "elevator speech" that any branch member can share when they have a chance conversation with elected officials. An elevator speech is a method of introducing yourself, getting across a key point or two, and making a connection with



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<<https://www.flickr.com/photos/stevensnodgrass/4017403148>>

someone in a brief amount of time. A frequently cited standard is 118 seconds – the average length of an elevator ride.

The basic template for your elevator speech should include your personal introduction and a succinct description of the mission and impact of AAUW and your branch. To wrap it all up, end with a very specific ask, such as an invitation to your branch's next meeting or support of a particular bill.

- Consider and develop appropriate materials for branch members and elected officials. Printed membership brochures and bookmarks can be distributed at key locations and events.
- Print up branch "business cards" with the AAUW mission, the AAUW website, and your branch's website, social media links, and contact information. All members can distribute these cards any time they are asked about AAUW.



- Branches with “interest groups” (subgroups who get together due to a common interest such as to play bridge, discuss books, watch movies, etc.) sometimes attract new members whose first engagement is through the interest group. If your branch has interest groups, be sure that participants of those groups are aware of your branch’s advocacy efforts that match the overall mission of AAUW.
- Use social media platforms to promote your branch’s advocacy activities and educate members on topics that match AAUW’s mission.
 - Branch websites and social media can be excellent sources of information about issues that match AAUW’s mission if they are kept current.
 - Collaborate with those responsible for your branch communications to ensure messaging and branding is consistent in all your print and digital publications.
 - Alert your branch members when new information and events are announced on your social media platforms, and encourage them to react to your posts, make comments, and share posts on their own pages to improve the chances that the platforms algorithms will display the post in other people’s feeds.
 - Different platforms attract different target audiences, so consider using more than one platform to extend your social media reach. For example, Facebook users trend a little older and Instagram users a bit younger, and LinkedIn targets a professional audience.
 - If your branch has a Facebook page, look to see if there are local Facebook groups where it would be appropriate to share your events and expand your reach beyond your own page. Your Facebook administrator or someone else in the branch will need to join these Facebook groups to share events to them.
- Encourage members to invite friends and acquaintances to attend Public Policy programs and events.
- Consider joining the local Chamber of Commerce. Often, chambers will host issue-focused events and even candidate forums that would be educational and ways to advocate for those issues that match AAUW’s mission.
- Look for other community organizations (e.g., [League of Women Voters](#)) that would be willing to cross-advertise programs and events. If another organization agrees to promote your branch events, your branch should be willing to share information about the other organization’s events as well. If branch members belong to other community

organizations, ask them to promote branch events to those groups.

- Look for online community calendars where you can advertise programs and events for free. Local radio and TV stations often have such calendars.
- Send press releases about your programs and events to your local newspaper. Try to establish a relationship with a reporter or editor of the paper so you can direct press releases to them directly and increase the probability that your information will be printed. If the newspaper publishes an article about your branch, be sure to share the link to the online article on social media and post it on your website.
- Set up an AAUW information table at local rallies, marches, Get Out the Vote, and community events. Distribute branch brochures and information about your upcoming events and take names and contact information of those interested in learning more about your branch. Ask how prospective members would prefer to be contacted. Younger people tend to prefer texts and emails rather than phone calls, and many people don't answer their phones when they don't recognize the phone number of the incoming call. After receiving contact information, be sure to follow up with a phone call (leave a voicemail message if no one answers), text, or email message inviting them to future meetings and programs.



Public Policy is Everyone's Business!



As stated previously, public policy advocacy is not a job to tackle alone. The PPCC should serve as the “Lead Cheerleader” for advocacy activities, but branch PPCCs can't effectively perform the jobs of public policy advocacy by themselves. Collaboration with other team members is essential. The PPCC can lead these efforts successfully only with the full support of the branch team. Together design an approach that ripples out to make every AAUW member respond to a “call to action” that makes an impact.



Resources

The following are resources that can be utilized and shared with both the Public Policy Committee, and if applicable, the membership at large. The more we share advocacy efforts, the more our branches become involved in the Public Policy efforts.

[AAUW of Michigan Website](#) (Click on “Public Policy” in the top menu)

- I. [AAUW of Michigan Public Policy Priorities 2023-2025](#). (This document is updated every two years.)
- II. **AAUWMI Public Policy Director Ruth Brown**
 - a. Cell or text (517) 398-0116; travelgirl4@comcast.net
 - b. Please contact Ruth Brown for notifications of quarterly Zoom meetings with Public Policy Chairs in other AAUWMI branches
 - c. Ruth can assist you and your branch to engage in Public Policy work with a goal to keep members abreast of issues and actively work with your representatives to pass laws that will benefit women and girls.
- III. [Government Relations Coordinator Mary Pollock](#)
 - a. Mary represents AAUWMI’s legislative issues at the Capitol including education that promotes gender fairness, equity, and diversity; economic self-sufficiency for all women; and equality, individual rights and social justice for a diverse society.
 - b. Phone (517) 351-7292; pollockm@comcast.net
 - c. [AAUWMI Lobby Corps Facebook group](#)—By joining this Facebook group you will receive up-to-date information on Michigan legislation that aligns with the AAUW Public Policy priorities.
 - d. Monthly Virtual Lobby Corps Zoom/Teleconferencing meeting. Usually, the 3rd Thursday of the month at 7pm EST. At least one PPC member should attend these very educational and inspiring meetings and report to the branch on key issues addressed at these meetings.
 - e. Government Relations Coordinator Reports. Mary Pollock’s monthly legislative activity update is sent to Public Policy chairs and interested members when signed up for the Virtual Lobby Corp meeting. Mary presents valuable information and links to legislation that is being followed by AAUWMI. Share with PPC and possibly branch membership. Urge all Public Policy Committee members to get on this e-mail list.
 - f. [Access Mary’s reports](#) (Capitol reports and state election and judicial news) under the sidebar to Government Relations Coordinator. Good information to share with the Public Policy committee and branch membership.
- IV. [Connect with State of Michigan Government](#)
 - a. [Michigan Citizen’s Guide to State Government](#) (Hint: ask your local representative or senator for a printed copy.)
 - b. [Michigan Legislature Web Site/Find Your Legislator](#). Access up to date legislation at

this all-purpose legislative website that contains all bills, status of bills, committees, and much more.

- c. [Michigan House Directory 2023-2024](#)
 - d. [Michigan Senate Directory 2023-2024](#)
 - e. [Tips on writing to Michigan State Legislators](#)
 - f. [Find Governor Gretchen Whitmer](#)
- V. [Connect with US Legislators](#)
- a. [Find Your US Representative](#)
 - b. [Find US Senator Debbie Stabenow](#)
 - c. [Find US Senator Gary Peters](#)

National AAUW (aauw.org) (Click on [“Take Action”](#) to find more info.)

- I. Our national organization monitors and recommends action on legislation contained in our bi-annual Public Policy Priorities. They have a plethora of information on these issues so local branches can guide their local priorities and become informed on issues that impact women and girls.
- II. [National AAUW Public Policy Priorities 2023-2025](#)
- III. [Two-Minute Activist](#) (Urge PPC members and if possible, the membership at large, to sign up (<https://www.aauw.org/act/two-minute-activist/>). This gives AAUW members a chance to “take action” by being alerted to national legislation.)
- IV. [AAUW Policy Center “Where We Stand”](#) (Researched and up-to-date information on the issues covered in the national AAUW Public Policy Priorities. Copy off the “Quick Facts” and provide them to the PPC members to help in establishing local priorities. Wonderful information to include in branch communications such as monthly newsletters or e-mails. This information is helpful in writing a letter to the editor or contacting a legislative representative.
- V. [Advocacy Toolkit](#) (A set of resources to guide you in advocating for women and girls through a variety of tactics and actions. Detailed information on topics such as:
 - a. How to Hold a Meeting with Your Elected Officials
 - b. How to Organize a Candidate Forum
 - c. How to Organize an Effective Petition Campaign
 - d. How to Work with the Media

Advocacy Ideas from other AAUWMI Branches

Please contact the AAUWMI Public Policy Director to add your advocacy ideas to this list!

- Conduct non-partisan candidate forums for local city/township, school board, and state legislative races.
- Conduct non-partisan voter registration opportunities at your local high school and/or higher education institution. Voter information and other election resources can be found at the [Michigan Voter Information Center](#).
- Meet with your local school Superintendent and attend School Board meetings and share

that AAUW supports a strong system of public education that promotes gender fairness, equity, and diversity, including vigorous enforcement of Title IX.

- Make a list of local representatives and their contact information. Share with PPC and perhaps the entire branch.
- Meet with local representatives when they host their local “office hours.” Send out a group e-mail to inform PPC and membership of local office hours.
- Urge branch members to sign up for [AAUWMI Lobby Corps on Facebook](#) to keep up to date on legislation. Keep in touch with our Government Relations Coordinator, Mary Pollock, to monitor key legislation.
- Urge PPC members and membership at large to sign up for [Two-Minute Activist](#).
- Write a letter to the editor or an Op-Ed to advocate for AAUW priorities.
- Become involved in Equal Pay Day efforts.
- Organize a “Rapid Responder Alert” system within your entire branch membership. When key issues are to be voted on by representatives, the Rapid Responder team informs membership of the Bill, gives background information, and provides information on how to contact their representative and make their voices known. Branch-wide ADVOCACY!
- Attend local library and other commission meetings.
- Meet with local election clerks.
- Consider collaborating with groups like the [League of Women Voters](#), [NAACP](#), [BPW](#), etc. on complementary issues.

