

# How to Hold a Meeting with Your Elected Officials

Connecting with your elected officials about AAUW issues in a face-to-face meeting is a great way to develop a relationship and influence the positions they take on issues important to you. AAUW-PA's plan leading up to Equal Pay Day will focus on our state legislature. These steps can also be applied to your federal congressional representative. These helpful tips will help you plan and prepare for your visit.

## Step One – Find Your Elected Leaders

The Pennsylvania Legislature saw a number of changes in the November 2018 election. Legislators retired, chose not to run or were not reelected. If you have a new legislator, this is a perfect time to get to know them, build advocacy relationships and raise AAUW's profile in your community. It is simple to find them by entering your home address at [Who is my legislator?](#) This will give you the names of your state representative, state senator, and federal congressional representative. You can see the District they represent by clicking on the map link. (This should be interesting to those of you concerned about Fair Districts.) Click on their name to go to their state page with the location and contact information for their local office.

## Step Two - Requesting a Visit

Pennsylvania legislators are usually in Harrisburg on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday and in the home district on Thursday and Friday unless there is a committee meeting scheduled, or it is a week when the senate or house is not meeting as they often alternate.

The most effective and efficient way of securing an appointment is to be specific about the purpose of the meeting. This preliminary meeting is a chance to get to know your legislator and introduce AAUW and our public policy priorities listed on the post card. You can add that you are an AAUW member and a constituent. If the legislator is not available, it is fine to request a meeting with a staff person.

## Step Three - Preparing for the Visit

- **Who will attend the meeting?** You can meet alone with the official or bring a group of AAUW members.
- **Do your research.** Learn about your elected officials' background, such as their education and profession, their voting record, and statements on issues of interest to AAUW. Their state site has links to their web site, Facebook page, Twitter account and even YouTube videos. You can also see sponsored legislation, co-sponsorship memoranda and committee assignments. Look for actions they might have taken that you can praise. You may find you have common areas of interest.
- **Raise AAUW Issues.** If your meeting includes a group of AAUW members, decide beforehand who will present the issues of concern to AAUW such as pay equity, education funding and fair districts. Since this is a get acquainted visit, you do not have to delve deeply into these issues. You are

just letting them know that you are ready to support legislation on these issues. Personal stories and local examples can help illustrate why an issue is important. If they ask about a specific bill, and you know that AAUW-PA supports it, you can say so. If you are not familiar with a bill, say you would like to review it and will get back to them. Get the bill number and contact your state public policy chairs for clarification.

- **Ask the Legislator About Their Issues.** What are their issues of concern? What bills do they plan to sponsor? Why are these issues important to them? The legislator's response won't always be clear, so listen carefully. What is the person saying about the issue? What questions or concerns do they have that might be answered? Pay attention to the direct and indirect statements of support or opposition. If you don't know the answer to a question your legislator asks, say you'll find out and then follow up. Contact your state public policy co-chairs for help finding answers.
- **Bring materials.** Prepare materials to leave with the elected official or staff. The AAUW PA Road Map to Pay Equity, the Pay Gap Numbers and the Public Policy Priorities post card are sufficient for this first visit. Be sure to mention that AAUW can provide research and resources on many issues.
- **Take a picture.** If you recruit a large group of people, be sure to take a picture with the legislator for your branch newsletter or social media. You can also send the picture to the legislator for their newsletter or social media.

#### **Step Four - After the Visit**

- Send a personal thank-you letter to your elected official.
- Follow up in a timely fashion with any requested materials and information.
- Share the results of your meetings with your branch and your state public policy chairs.

If you can't arrange an in-person visit, you can just drop by the office. Follow these tips to make the most of a shorter visit:

- You'll still want to do your research on the legislator and bring materials to leave behind with someone.
- After entering the office, identify yourself to the front desk as an AAUW member and constituent.
- Ask to speak with a staff member who handles the issue you want to discuss. If that person is unavailable, ask if there is someone else you can meet with to speak about the issue. Be flexible, as local legislative offices are usually short-staffed.
- Leave a copy of your materials with the staff member. If no one is available to speak with you, leave a note, your contact information, and the materials you brought.

Always remember that AAUW is a non-partisan organization. Maintain a friendly, positive attitude. Leave the legislator with a friendly feeling, even if you don't agree on an issue.