

## CHAPTER TWO: STATE COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH TO BRANCHES

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## 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](http://www.juno.com), [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com), and [www.hotmail.com](http://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](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.