



A Welcome to FEW's Legislative Committee Chairs You Are Very Important!

Thank you very much for volunteering to be a Federally Employed Women's (FEW) Legislative Committee Chair for your Chapter or Region. You serve as a very important link between your National Vice President for Congressional Relations and FEW's tens of thousands of members and supporters nationwide.

This guide has been developed to explain what a FEW Legislative Committee Chair does for the organization, as well as what you can expect to receive from your National Representatives. We hope this answers all of your questions—but please do not hesitate to contact either Matthew F. Fogg, National Vice President for Congressional Relations (congressionalrelationsvp@few.org) 240-375-3580 and/or FEW's Washington Representative Janet Kopenhaver at (JanetK@few.org) 703-528-7822.

- *Policies and Procedures*—FEW National Officers need to keep apprised of activities conducted by the various Chapters and Regions throughout the year. This is done through the online submission of quarterly reports.
- *Conduit to Chapter Members*—Legislative Committee Chairs receive several publications from Janet Kopenhaver, including periodic Action Alerts. We rely on our Legislative Committee Chairs to forward these to their Chapter members at their home email addresses and urge them to participate.
- *Legislative Events*—We urge our Legislative Committee Chairs to conduct several Legislative-based events throughout the year to keep our members involved and educated about bills and regulations impacting them as federal workers. You will find several suggestions later in this guide on types of events that could be organized, including visits with legislators and Voter Registration Drives.
- *Hatch Act Limitations*—As a Legislative Committee Chair, you should be familiar with the Hatch Act limitations. The Hatch Act identifies political activities that are permitted and prohibited by Government employees.

Policies and Procedures—What a Legislative Committee Chair Should be Doing

Chapters are required to send quarterly reports on activities conducted during the previous three months. These reports can be filed online at (<http://few.org/quarterly%5Freports/>). It is a simple task. Log onto the site, pick the Region and Chapter and fill in the blanks. The reports are due on the 10th day following the end of each quarter (January 10th; April 10th; July 10th and October 10th). An important component of these reports includes details on what specific legislative activities the Chapter conducted during the quarter. Here is a section from the report that must be submitted addressing Legislative activities:

Quarterly Legislative Activities

Letter Writing Campaigns: [] Yes [] No **Issues:**

Telephone Campaigns: [] Yes [] No **Issues:**

Congressional Visits: [] Yes [] No **Issues**

Participated in Voter Registration Activities: [] Yes [] No **#Registered:** _____

Agency Visits, Compliance Activities and Other Activities: (Attach additional pages as necessary.)

Legislative Committee Chairs also are FEW's primary link with FEW's general membership, and we rely heavily on you to forward important materials to your Chapter members. Listed below are more details on what we ask our Legislative Committee Chairs to do throughout the year.

What a Legislative Committee Chair Receives from National

The main thing to remember is that you are not alone. You receive quite a bit of very important Information to keep you and your members abreast of the top issues impacting federally employed women (see below). In most cases, all we ask is that you forward these publications to your members.

FEW Washington Update:

Twice a month (on the 1st and 16th of each month) all FEW members receive from the National Office the **FEW Washington Update** prepared by our Washington Representative. This publication is an exclusive FEW member benefit, so you can also use it as a membership tool. (NOTE: For this reason, we ask that you only forward this once to potential members as an enticement for them to join.)

This publication includes all important legislative, regulatory and general interest developments impacting federally employed women in particular, and federal workers overall. This will not include any lobbying information, so it can be sent to FEW members' government email addresses.

The issues are broken into Tiers according to our Legislative Agenda. Tier I are those issues that directly impact federally employed women; Tier II impact federal workers; and Tier III are those dealing with women's issues.

Action Alerts:

FEW's most important advocacy tool is its Grassroots network—and specifically its letter-writing campaigns. Because most federal workers cannot come to Washington, D.C., often to meet in person with their legislators, the primary means of communication between our members and their elected officials is through email letters. These letter-writing campaigns are crucial to the achievement of FEW's legislative goals, and we ask our Legislative Committee Chairs to aggressively urge their members to participate. Not only do they alert the legislators about the issues of most importance to their constituents and federal workers, but also FEW's Washington Representative uses them when she visits staffers on the Hill as well as when FEW members participate in Lobby Days.

We cannot stress enough how much letters help us achieve our legislative goals!

To make it easy for our members and other interested stakeholders, FEW has a Grassroots Advocacy online tool through the website (www.capwiz.com/few) that allows visitors to send letters virtually by just tapping a few keys on their computers. The letters are basically written—advocates just need to fill out their zip code and address and then the correspondence is sent automatically to their elected Senators and/or House of Representatives member.

As bills are introduced that are part of the FEW's top legislative goals and objectives for the year, FEW's Washington Representative sends out **Action Alerts** to all Legislative Committee Chairs. Because this is considered "lobbying," these Action Alerts are sent ONLY to home email addresses, but a notice is also sent to your work email addresses telling you to check your home email accounts.

Again, these Action Alerts are only sent to Legislative Committee Chairs, and we are relying on you to forward them to all of your Chapter members' home email addresses. However, unlike the **FEW Washington Updates**, these can also be sent to non-members in order to get as many letters sent to Capitol Hill as possible.

Every letter sent by FEW members is followed up on with a phone call from FEW's Washington Representative, which further increases our success rate. FEW members have been instrumental through their letter-writing in adding scores of co-sponsors to important pieces of legislation that in turn helps move them through the legislative process. All successful FEW advocates receive a congratulatory email from FEW's Washington Representative when their legislator co-sponsors bills according to their request.

Flooding Capitol Hill with letters on issues of importance to federally employed women is therefore extremely important to FEW's Legislative Program, as well as their being

very effective. However, we need FEW's tens of thousands of members and supporters to participate in these campaigns, and we urge our Legislative Committee Chairs to encourage their members to get involved by reminding them of this at every Chapter or Regional event, meeting or gathering. We would also encourage Legislative Committee Chairs to host an event specifically for the purpose of sending letters (see Ideas for Legislative Programs for more information).

Other Publications:

Some other publications that you might find useful are *"How Congress Works: The Making of a Federal Law," "Meeting Your Legislator: a 'How-to' Guide for FEW Members," "Every Vote Counts: Conducting a Successful Voter Registration Drive,"* and the *"Voting Record Scorecard."* Any of these can be the topic for a Chapter meeting.

Ideas for Legislative Programs

So now you might be asking, "What can I do to get more involved?" There are numerous events you can plan as a Legislative Committee Chair to obtain more involvement from your members. Here are some ideas:

CAPWIZ Primer/Workshop:

We have already developed a CAPWIZ PowerPoint presentation and script on how to use the Grassroots Advocacy website, and we can provide these materials to you. One Chapter event could be to meet somewhere that has computer and Internet capability, run through the presentation, and then have all attendees send letters right then and there. FEW National Representatives can also provide you with updated Grassroots success stories to make your members more energized about participating.

Note: As a federal employee, the office computer cannot be used to send letters from CAPWIZ because this is considered lobbying, and the Hatch Act prohibits lobbying by federal employees while on the job.

Also, FEW's National Vice President for Congressional Relations is available to make presentations on the top legislative issues for FEW's, recent successes and CAPWIZ.

Visit a Legislator at the District Office:

Congress typically has long adjournment periods over holidays, the summer and other times during the year. Use the *Meeting Your Legislator: A "How-to" Guide for FEW Members* booklet for guidance to set up a local meeting with your legislator and your members to discuss legislative issues of importance to federally employed women. These meetings can be very productive because the lawmakers have more time at home than when they are in Washington, D.C. Remember to provide feedback to the Vice President for Congressional Relations with a copy to FEW's Washington Representative on what you discussed during these meetings.

Handout materials to give to the legislator and staff are available from FEW's Washington Representative on the issues of most importance to federally employed women before your meeting. Please remember to also provide to the legislator's staff the employment statistics for his/her congressional district and state. These statistics can be found at the following link:

http://eyeonwashington.com/few_map_2008/index.html

Host a Legislator or Staff Member at a Chapter or Region Event:

Invite the legislator and/or staff member to be the keynote speaker at an event during the Congressional recesses. The topics could include what legislation will likely be debated and/or passed during the upcoming Congressional session; an update on bills of importance to federal workers and/or the legislative process. This is another great way to cultivate a closer working relationship with that legislator and staff to make them aware of issues of importance to federal workers. Again, include the Congressional district employment statistics for the legislative event.

Program Featuring a Movie:

There are numerous movies with politics as their central theme which could be shown as a Chapter event. This type of activity could also be used as a fundraiser for your Chapter. For example, the Denver Federal Chapter has hosted such a program twice, which included a demonstration of quick and easy-to-prepare food by Tastefully Simple. The company donated twenty percent (20%) of the sales back to the Chapter, and attendees were treated to samples of popcorn and soda. Over one thousand dollars (\$1,000) was raised, and the attendees learned about the political process.

Conduct a Voter Registration Drive:

Use the *Every Vote Counts: Conducting a Successful Voter Registration Drive* booklet for step-by-step instructions to organize a Voter Registration drive. In the past FEW members have been instrumental in registering more than 12,500 voters. If we want to put legislators that support our priorities in office, then we need to get them elected. We can only do that if we all vote.

Hatch Act

The Hatch Act identifies which political activities are permitted and prohibited by Government employees. All civilian employees in the Executive Branch are covered by these provisions. During the 103rd Congress, FEW worked diligently to enact Hatch Act Reform Amendments to eliminate restrictions on federal workers participating in the political process. These were signed by President Clinton in 1993.

Although federal workers are still prohibited from running for partisan political offices themselves, employees have much more leeway in political campaigns as a result of this Act. Voter registration and get-out-the-vote activities are fully permissible under the Hatch Act as long as they are carried out in a nonpartisan manner.

Most employees are free to participate in the following types of activities in their free time but not at the workplace: campaigning for or against candidates in partisan elections, distributing campaign material, organizing material, organizing political rallies and circulating nominating petitions.

Federal employees can NOT engage in political activities while on duty, in any Government office or while using a Government vehicle, be candidates for public office in partisan elections, wear political buttons while on duty or knowingly solicit or discourage the political activity of any person who has business before the agency. Documents (brochure, flyer and poster) addressing the Hatch Act are posted on FEW's website under the "Legislative" focus area for both federal employees and State and Local employees. These documents were prepared by the U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC), which is responsible for investigating reports or complaints concerning Hatch Act violations. OSC is an independent federal investigative and prosecutorial agency. These documents are posted as guidance.

If you need specific clarification, contact your agency's legal counsel for guidance. Again, we thank you for volunteering for this most important position, and we greatly depend upon you and your members to help achieve our legislative goals. Please remember that you can always call the Vice President for Congressional Relations or FEW's Washington Representative to help and to provide materials for you.

TOGETHER—WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.



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