

PROGRAM ON A PAGE (or two)

AAUW CAPITAL LOBBY HILL CORPS The Front Lines of Public Policy

The history of AAUW's advocacy efforts dates back almost to AAUW's inception. The Committee on Educational Legislation was formed in 1898. Members used the committee to promote policies to further educational opportunities for women and girls. During the next 75 years AAUW members expanded on the policy to focus on legislation that touched all aspects of women's lives. In the 70s the ground was fertile for the development of the Lobby Corps. Women in Washington and around the country wanted to make a difference, and AAUW members were no different. Change was imminent and the political arena was exciting and conducive to women's groups joining forces with other groups to push a legislative agenda that would further the rights of women.

For the past thirty-two years women, ranging in age from their early 20s through their 80s, pair off with lists of congressional offices requiring visits in hand. "Ready, Set, Go!" could be the mantra of this group of about twenty women, assembled in the cafeteria deep in the lower levels of the Senate side of the Capitol building in Washington, D.C. Every Thursday morning that Congress is in session, this group of citizen lobbyists gather their belongings and determinedly forge ahead to advocate for AAUW and to represent AAUW members across the country. They are ready to persuade staffers and elected officials to explain why they should pay attention to AAUW's position on the issues. Thus, our volunteer members and college student interns give AAUW a voice and a face on Capitol Hill. This has meant tens of thousands of visits to congressional offices, which had made AAUW a respected name among members of Congress. Because of this AAUW has had significant political impact on issues such as:

- education
- civil rights
- reproductive rights
- economic security

Members of the Lobby Corps have always been aware of their unique status. In one overview of their activities written in the early 1980s, a member noted that the halls of congress were dubbed "Gucci Gulch" by *Time* magazine, a reference to the pricey trademark attire of the paid lobbyists. However, "on Thursdays when AAUW hits the Hill, it is strictly rubber-heeled Naturalizers."