



## AAUW Voter Education Campaign 2002

### Planning and Promoting Issue and Candidate Forums

#### Plan Your Forum

- ✓ **Appoint a planning team.** Delegate responsibilities to involve more people.
- ✓ **Pick an issue.** Choose an AAUW priority issue such as hate crimes or judicial nominations. Or, if you are planning a candidate forum, identify all the major candidates in the district and invite them to participate.
- ✓ **Work in coalition.** Co-sponsoring a forum with other community organizations will increase turnout and media coverage.
- ✓ **Choose your location.** Make sure your site is well known, centrally located, and wheelchair accessible.
- ✓ **Schedule the forum.** Avoid religious or government holidays, business hours, and dates when other community functions are scheduled.
- ✓ **Invite panelists or candidates and a moderator.** Choose panelists and a moderator who are well known and informed on the issues. Be sure to invite all participants well in advance. For candidate forums, all major party candidates running for office must be invited to participate.
- ✓ **Provide information.** At issue forums, make relevant background information on the issues available. Be prepared to answer questions before and after the event.

#### Invite Women in the Community

- Reach out to AAUW branches and members-at-large several weeks before your event.
- Ask coalition partners to invite their members.
- Post fliers in the community.
- Advertise in local newspapers and on community calendars.

#### Work With the Media

- ✓ **Designate a media spokesperson.** Your spokesperson should handle all interviews and information requests.
- ✓ **Send a media advisory to local media outlets.** Three to five days before your event, fax a media advisory listing the who, what, when, and where of the event.
- ✓ **Call the media.** Two to three days before the event, phone all news outlets that might cover

the event and explain that you are following up on written materials sent earlier.

- ✓ **Prepare a news release.** The news release, handed out at your event and distributed more broadly afterward, should capture reporters' interest. Unlike the advisory, your news release should include full details of the event, including quotes from spokespersons and/or attendees.
- ✓ **Prepare media packets.** Prepare a media kit to give to reporters at the event or send to reporters who cannot attend. Kits should contain statements from speakers, an agenda, a description of the event, a news release, background on AAUW and the voter education campaign, and spokesperson contact information.
- ✓ **Interact with the media.** Help reporters write a comprehensive story by talking with reporters in attendance. Send the news release to those reporters not attending the event.
- ✓ **Follow up.** Immediately after the event, contact reporters who attended to see if they need additional information or quotes for their stories.

#### Know the Legal Guidelines

All election activities carried out in AAUW's name must adhere to the following principles:

##### Do:

- Conduct election-related activities that do not expressly advocate the election or defeat of any clearly identified candidate or political party.
- Gather and publicize information about the candidates' positions on issues.
- Invite all major party candidates running for office to the forum.

##### Do Not:

- Endorse candidates in ANY partisan election.
- Coordinate election-related activities with one or more candidates, campaigns, or party-related organizations.

A complete set of legal guidelines is available on the AAUW website at <http://www.aauw.org/6000/vec.html>.

#### Special Action Alert Insert

Questions? Contact the AAUW Public Policy Department at 800/608-5286 or [voterred@aauw.org](mailto:voterred@aauw.org).

