



AIAA Public Policy Guide for AIAA Sections and Student Chapters

Introduction

This document is intended to provide guidance and suggestions for AIAA sections and student chapters to be more engaged in public policy activities in their local area. The resources available from the AIAA Public Policy Committee (PPC) are identified, example events and activities are described, and general advice and best practices are shared about these events and activities.

AIAA section and chapter leaders should be able to use this document to plan public policy-related events and activities that would work for their unique sections or chapters. Section leaders should also be able to identify what specific public policy topics are most relevant for their locality and then plan events around those topics.

There is no expectation that sections do everything in this document. Section leaders can pick and choose what sort of events are most likely to engage their members effectively. However, including some of these events in the yearly schedule is a great way to win an award for your section!

AIAA Section Awards each year recognize sections who host public policy events and engage with public policy in various ways.

Furthermore, AIAA as an institute *needs* sections to get involved! While the PPC engages with policymakers at the national level at certain events throughout the year, we need help from AIAA members to engage with legislators at all levels throughout the year. “All politics is local” – this is a well-known adage. Local AIAA members talking to local legislators about local issues and policy has a real impact and is so critical to advancing key issues. You do not have to go to Washington, DC, to make an impact. Additionally, many things at the federal level (e.g., committees, caucuses) are mimicked on a local level, providing AIAA members with a wide array of options for how to engage.

Resources from the PPC

Many resources are available on the AIAA Advocacy website:

<https://aiaa.org/advocacy/>

This section will provide a brief overview of what is available on this site and how the resources can be used.

Look-ahead: *The PPC is currently considering new ideas for additional resources to offer sections, such as an annual webinar about the key issues, an virtual training webinar on hosting advocacy events, and other ways to collect stories and suggestions from sections nationwide. Stay tuned!*

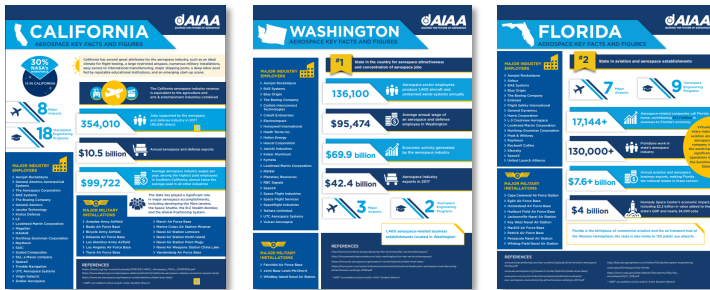
AIAA Key Issues

Each year the PPC establishes key issues that become the focal points of the Institute’s engagement with congressional decision makers, the administration, and state and local officials. The key issues align with the domains, which are Aeronautics, Space, R&D, and Defense/National Security. Our key issues provide focus and guidance for PPC-organized events, such as the Aerospace Policy Connections (APC) series; drive panel sessions at our annual forums; underpin our state-level advocacy efforts; and form the basis of smaller, focused events and activities. They are posted on the AIAA PPC website along with a “Public Policy One Pager”.

State Fact Sheets

AIAA has developed fact sheets highlighting key aerospace statistics and assets in all 50 states plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. The documents are a useful reference tool for members when educating policymakers at the federal, state, and local levels. Each fact sheet is posted on the AIAA website:

<https://www.aiaa.org/advocacy/Grassroots-Engagement>



Policy Papers

As the world’s largest aerospace professional society, AIAA has an important role in the national public policy debate. Toward that end, AIAA public policy papers are prepared to convey educational and informational material and may express opinions of and recommendations for action by the government (the U.S. Congress, executive branch departments/agencies, and state legislatures) to address issues of interest or concern to our members. They are a mechanism by which AIAA members contribute to crafting or influencing government solutions to problems.

These papers are updated on an ad hoc basis when a need is identified. For example, a change to the current state of a topic like FAA Certification or Hypersonics may warrant an update to the relevant information papers. Additionally, the PPC has occasionally released over-arching policy platform papers, such as the [Space Policy Platform Paper \(2025\)](#) and [Aviation Policy Platform Paper \(2025\)](#).

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AIAA Contact Points

Each AIAA region is represented on the PPC by a **Regional Deputy Director of Public Policy (DDPP)** who also are members of the PPC's Advocacy Working Group:

Region I	Michael Barton michael.barton@mdaero.org	Region IV	VACANT vacant
Region II	Kevin Simmons ksimmons@teknatheos.org	Region V	Frank Youkhana frank.w.youkhana@boeing.com
Region III	Patrick McNally pjmcn@umich.edu	Region VI	Hemali Vyas hemali.n.vyas@jpl.nasa.gov

Advocacy Working Group Chair:
Matt Angiulo
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Director, Public Policy & Government Relations
Ryan Cooperman
ryanc@aiaa.org

Commented [MLG1]: Need to update any DDPPs as needed

Public Policy Event and Activity Options

Many of the events and activities identified by this document could be organized at the state, section, or chapter level. Table 1 below provides recommendations for what level of participation the event/activity is most appropriate for, but this is truly going to be dependent on you as the organizer's time availability and what you are passionate about making happen for those in your state/section/chapter!

Keep in mind that public policy events and activities have great potential to make an impact whether they are designed to facilitate advocacy for AIAA key issues or to educate members. There are therefore two general types of events: **advocacy** events are designed to raise awareness and provide public support for key issues, and **educational** events/activities are

designed to facilitate learning and exposure, where perhaps AIAA members would not otherwise be exposed to public policy or related topics. It is recommended to organize one or more educational events prior to organizing advocacy events, especially if much of the local membership is new to public policy discussions! Regional DDPPs and section/chapter leadership should remember that educating AIAA members is an important pillar of the Institute's work.

Table 1. Summary of Public Policy Event and Activity Suggestions

Event/Activity	Recommended for State Level?	Recommended for Section and Chapter Level?	Type of Event/Activity
State Aerospace Day	Yes		Advocacy
Meet Locally with your Member of Congress	Yes	Yes	Advocacy
Meet with your State Leadership	Yes	Yes	Advocacy
Invite Congressional Delegation to Section or Chapter Meetings		Yes	Advocacy and/or Educational for AIAA members
Provide Input to the AIAA Key Issues		Yes	Educational for AIAA members
Write an Information Paper		Yes	Educational for AIAA members <i>(feeds educational material for Congressional staff)</i>
Policy 101 Lunch & Learn		Yes	Educational for AIAA members

Remember: Building and strengthening relationships with members of Congress and their staff is essential to AIAA's public policy efforts. Engaging with your senators and representative(s) can take place in many ways and in many places – in Washington, DC, in your home state at a State Aerospace Day, and/or through one-on-one meetings while home in their district, such as during a congressional recess.

State Aerospace Day

Many states hold an "Aerospace Day" to educate state leaders on the impact of the local aerospace industry. AIAA sections should work collaboratively with other local aerospace groups to present a unified industry message. Many states have specific state aerospace organizations and chapters of other national groups, such as the Aerospace States Association. AIAA does not always have to be in the lead if it is a key event contributor. Identifying a key person, or persons, who belong to AIAA, and other groups, can help smooth the coordination process.

Additionally, when you participate in a State Aerospace Day, we encourage you to pick and choose the representatives you meet with to be most impactful. Other than the representatives for whom you are a constituent, look at the committees and caucuses that your state's representatives are on, and focus on members of committees/caucuses relevant to Aerospace & Defense.

Example: Virginia Aerospace Day

Virginia Aerospace Day is an annual event that brings together multiple professional organizations and industry leaders such as AIAA, the Virginia Space Grant Consortium, and NASA to advocate and educate policy-makers on current aerospace issues. The event typically includes meetings with legislators, outreach activities, an aerospace exhibition, and an evening reception. Additionally, the organizers create communications materials that summarize aerospace activities in Virginia and highlight key challenges that Virginia companies are facing.



Source: Virginia Space Grant Consortium, 2024, https://vsgc.odu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/2024-Aerospace-Day_V11.pdf

Remember: Participation in a State Aerospace Day, even if AIAA is not the leading organizer, is reportable on the annual section report! Take a group picture while you're there and make sure to note your participation, increasing your chance of winning a section award!

Meet Locally with Your Member of Congress

The best chance to meet directly with your member of Congress is actually while they are at home during a congressional recess. You don't have to travel to DC! This is an opportune time for sections to build relationships with members of Congress and legislative staff and to begin an ongoing dialogue to highlight the Institute's key issues and subjects of interest to the local aerospace community.

Below is a list of steps AIAA members should use to identify their congressional representatives, learn when the representative may be in their district office, and schedule meetings with your delegation members:

- **Identify Your Member of Congress**

"Find your Representative" by entering your zip code at <http://www.house.gov/>. The list of U.S. Senators can be found at <http://www.senate.gov/senators/contact/>.

- **Look Up Your Representative's (District) Contact Information**

Contact information for your representative's local district office is usually located on their official website.

- **Check the Congressional Calendar**

Try to schedule meetings while your representative is home during a district work period (recess). The House and Senate calendars are posted at:

<https://www.house.gov/legislative-activity>
https://www.senate.gov/legislative/2025_schedule.htm

- **Schedule Your Meeting**

Contact your representative's district office and request a 30-minute meeting with the member. The member's schedule is quite busy so be flexible when making the appointment. Do not be discouraged should the member not be available because we can be equally effective when meeting with a district aide. When making the appointment be sure to:

- State your name and affiliation (AIAA)
- Explain what you would like to discuss (reason for meeting)
- Explain why your meeting is relevant to the member

- **Educate Yourself on the Key Issues and Know Your Audience**

It is important for AIAA members to be properly prepared ahead of any formal meetings with their elected officials. One should first review the lawmaker's biography on their website and have a general understanding of their stances on relevant aerospace & defense issues. Next, review the key issues, located on the AIAA website, and select the issues that resonate best with that member of Congress. **Feel free to reach out to your Regional DDPP or AIAA's government relations staffer should you need additional background on the key issues.** You may also coordinate with the PPC on any additional issues that you would like to bring up that are pertinent to the aerospace community in your state.

- **Hold Your Meeting and Report Back**

Be sure to provide the results of your meeting(s), including any follow-up requests, to your Regional DDPP and/or AIAA's government relations staffer.

Additional Best Practices:

- As a constituent, you have a right to have meetings with your representative. Do not think that being an individual makes you less impactful.

Remember: Your representative was elected to represent YOU! They want to hear from you, their constituent, on what you care about and what the issues are. You should feel confident and empowered when you reach out to their office.

- Please remember that you are representing the Institute, so you should always conduct yourself in a professional manner. Being prepared and polished will help get our message across and leave the lawmaker with a positive impression about AIAA.
- The key issues should drive much of the conversation. You can bring up more specific issues for your district, but this is not needed necessarily. Focus on generally introducing the AIAA key issues to your representative and introducing yourself and AIAA as a technical resource that they can leverage when they have aerospace and defense questions.
- Work on building a relationship locally if you can (e.g., “meet & greet”), and then follow up with a meeting in Washington, DC, or at your state capitol.

Meet with Your State Leadership

Building and strengthening relationships between the section and state leadership can also contribute to AIAA’s public policy efforts. Specifically, sections can make local leadership more aware of national and local aerospace issues that impact our industry and membership by:

- **Identifying a State PP Coordinator**
The AIAA Headquarters staff is small, especially for public policy, and lacks the ability to support events in many different states while still resourcing national events. Consequently, it is recommended that sections select a State Coordinator.
 - For states with only one section the Section Public Policy Officer can serve as the coordinator.
 - For states with multiple sections the sections are encouraged to work together to select a State Coordinator.
 - For sections whose territory covers multiple states, you can select State Coordinators for each state so long as you have sufficient member interest. If you have few members participating, then you may decide to focus on just one state in your territory. This is usually the state with the highest membership representation.
- **Bonus: Sharing Best Practices**
Gather best practices from the sections and provide “how to” resource materials to help the sections grow local public policy activities.

Invite Congressional Delegation to Section or Chapter Meetings

A third option for engaging your Congressional representatives is to invite them to a section or chapter meeting. You could invite federal, state, or local representatives! It is possible in this case for the representative themselves to attend, but it is more likely that one or more members of their legislative staff will attend. This more casual format might be more appealing than setting up a meeting in their office, and there is the added benefit of more AIAA members being able to engage in dialogue with the representative or their staff.

It should be understood that this would be a specially organized section or chapter meeting—a congressional delegation is unlikely to be interested in sitting through a regular AIAA agenda. Here are several suggested approaches / formats to consider:

- Invite your member of Congress to a standing section or chapter meeting and have them speak at the beginning about one of our key issues that they have been dealing with recently, then invite Q&A
- Invite your member of Congress to a section or chapter dinner and have them speak at the beginning about one of our key issues that they have been dealing with recently
- Invite a subject-matter expert to give a guest lecture to educate your lawmaker(s) about one of our key issues [See “Policy 101 Lunch & Learn” section below]
- Organize a panel session with a local policymaker and subject matter expert(s) – or alternatively, multiple local policymakers – about a key issue or other pertinent matter of interest to your section membership
- Hold a “Meet & Greet” happy hour with your local representative(s)
- Invite a legislator or group of legislators to visit and tour a local aerospace facility¹

Best Practices:

- When contacting your congressional office about these types of events, be sure to disclose how many participants you anticipate will attend the event *and* the breakdown of participants (e.g., how many are constituents, how many students). Also, please explain the event format when making these types of requests.
- Limit invitations only to *elected* officials – unless you can confirm attendance from all parties who are running for election, sticking only to elected officials will avoid bias
- August is an excellent time to engage with federal representatives, since they will be back home in their districts during the Congressional recess
- The PPC’s Advocacy Working Group and AIAA’s government relations staffer are available to help your Section in planning for the event. Sections as are also encouraged to share information and lessons learned from your event with the Advocacy Working Group to help other sections in planning their future events.

Provide Input to the AIAA Key Issues

The PPC is always looking for input on key issues from various communities within the Institute. Sections with policy issue ideas should reach out to the AIAA PPC Chair. You can also send them via email to your Regional DDPP. (See the “AIAA Contact Points” section for up-to-date names and email addresses.) Please be sure that your suggestions are timely and pertinent to the entire aerospace community.

Write an Information Paper

The PPC welcomes help from members at writing new information papers or white papers or updating the existing papers. These papers have proven to be extremely valuable for educating legislative staff on aerospace and defense topics. They are often used by the PPC as leave-behind material and to answer questions received from Congressional offices.

¹ It is critical *before* inviting legislators or their staff to any aerospace facility or workplace to pre-coordinate this idea with the appropriate managers/leadership of that facility or workplace. Most larger companies and agencies have dedicated public relations and/or legislative affairs staff, and these people *must* be involved to avoid any conflicts or even duplicative invites to that legislative office (e.g., a visit from that office might already be planned).

There are several types of Policy Papers, each of which reflect a different level of expectations and also a different level of approval needed from the Institute:

- **Information Papers:** A paper that provides information only on a particular topic and does not make any formal policy recommendations. They may be written to support the Institute's [Key Issues](#). Information papers are subject to approval at the Section, Technical, Program, and/or Standing Committee level.
- **White Papers:** A paper that offers information or proposals on a particular issue. From time to time, AIAA, sister societies, and other constituent groups will collaboratively author such papers of relevance to our common audiences and reflect our common interests. These papers may include formal recommendations of government action on the issue.
- **Opinion Papers:** A paper that provides an objective and balanced study reflecting the collective opinion of a group or coalition of groups within the Institute. The paper may include formal recommendations of government action on the issue. It is important to note that these papers represent the views of the sponsoring group, but not necessarily the views of AIAA. These papers require the review and approval of sponsoring group and shall not conflict with any Board of Trustees – approved position.
 - These are not recommended as in-scope for an AIAA section or chapter on their own. Please reach out to the AIAA PPC to get review and approval.
- **Institute Position Papers:** A paper that provides an objective and balanced study with a clear AIAA position on the best course of action by government, industry, academia, or other stakeholders to address an issue of interest or concern to AIAA members. At a minimum, these papers are subject to review and approval by the PPC and the Board of Trustees.
 - These are not recommended as in-scope for an AIAA section or chapter on their own. Please reach out to the AIAA PPC to get review and approval.

How to get started?

- **Choose a topic.** Do you know of a policy topic that is of interest to your local AIAA members and to your locality? Is there a gap in the papers already on the PPC website, or a paper that needs an update based on recent events or recent advancements in research or technology?
 - Also, do you want to write this paper to cover the topic at the local, state, or national level? Choose the level of scope that is appropriate to the expertise available within your members, and consider how you may need to involve additional levels of review at the end. For instance, if a chapter wishes to write a state- or national-level paper, additional reviewers at the state level or from Institute-level working groups or task forces is advised.

One excellent idea for a section-level activity would be to write a report summarizing the aerospace capabilities and facilities in your local area and also summarize any infrastructure, workforce, or other policy issues relevant to the aerospace workforce in your local area.

Bonus: *Get media coverage for your report! Reach out to a local news station and see if they will write an article or feature you in a news segment, raising awareness about the policy issue that you wrote about in your report.*

- **Form a team.** Invite members of your section/chapter to collaborate on writing this paper. Look for members that have particular experience/knowledge in the chosen topic.
- **Establish a schedule.** Identify when a first draft will be completed and how the team members should contribute to different sections.
- **Invite reviews from other subject matter experts and your section/chapter leadership.** A technical and editorial review is necessary, as valuable feedback can be collected that helps focus the message and/or introduce alternative perspectives. This is both appreciated and necessary prior to sharing with the PPC.
- **Share with the PPC!** Reach out to the PPC Chair, whose contact is provided in the “AIAA Contact Points” section above. The PPC will perform a review of the paper before proceeding with next steps, such as publishing the paper on the website and leveraging the paper in meetings

Best Practices:

- **Be mindful of the length.** An information/white paper of only 1-2 pages has a much better impact for busy legislative staff with limited time to read.
- **Avoid technical jargon.** Try to explain things as simply as possible, and of course, define all acronyms!
- **Invite multiple subject matter experts to contribute,** so that multiple perspectives are covered and addressed.
- If writing a white paper that makes a recommendation, **make sure the message is clear!** There have been multiple instances of the recommendation / message being lost amidst a wealth of technical information. Try to avoid this, such as by stating the recommendation up front and/or separating the recommendation at the end into its own dedicated section.

This list is not exhaustive but hopefully provides a valuable starting point for members looking to write such papers for the first time.

***What happens next?** While the PPC will gladly use updated and timely white papers to support advocacy activities at the national level, there's more that you can do as a section! Write an email to your member of Congress and share the paper with them. Use the paper to begin a dialogue with your representatives and local officials, thereby feeding other future policy events, like setting up meetings with your representatives or planning a State Aerospace Day!*

Policy 101 Lunch & Learn

There are many different possible formats of a "101" style event, including Lunch & Learn, Policy Breakfast, "Pints & Policy" Happy Hour, Webinar, etc. But regardless of what time of day and whether it is hosted in person or virtually, there are two key features of any "101":

- A **guest speaker** provides an educational overview of a specific topic of interest, where the topic specifically has policy implications and relevance to current events
- There is a **question and answer / discussion period**, during which members can engage in dialogue.

It is up to the section/chapter leadership to customize the format based on what is most likely to best engage their members. Additionally, when choosing a guest speaker, section/chapter leadership should consider what topic is most relevant to current events and to their locality. Guest speakers could be AIAA members, members of local organizations / professional societies, etc.

Consider inviting a local policymaker / government official, especially if they have jurisdiction relevant to the topic or are a member of a relevant committee / caucus! You might offer this person a chance to speak at the beginning of the event as a courtesy and/or to share their perspective on the topic at the end. By inviting them, you can double the value and impact of the event by (1) educating both your members and the local policymaker / official, and (2) building a relationship and establishing a dialogue with that policymaker / official. This is an excellent way for AIAA to continue to establish a reputation as a technical resource for policymakers.

If there is a university/college nearby, then Policy 101s are perfect for inviting local AIAA student chapters to attend! The impact of the event will be larger if you share the invite beyond the section membership. You can also collect topic ideas from the student chapters. For example, an AIAA Design/Build/Fly team may be working on autonomous concepts, so they might be interested in topics related to autonomy.

Example: Policy Breakfast on U.S. Leadership in Cislunar Space

The PPC hosts Aerospace 101 and Policy Breakfast events in Washington, DC, as part of the [Aerospace Policy Connection series](#). These events are targeted at Congressional staff and the local aerospace workforce and have been well attended.

AIAA Policy Breakfast: U.S. Leadership in Cislunar Space

8 February 2024 | 8 pm--9:30 am
U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 1615 H St NW, Washington, DC

Home | Events & Learning | Events

Please join the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA) for a special policy breakfast discussing U.S. Leadership in Cislunar Space. We will have speakers from the National Space Council, DARPA, NASA, commercial space, and academia.

Please **RSVP** to confirm your attendance.

AIAA's policy breakfast program is designed to connect our members with government stakeholders and other thought leaders. It covers topical issues of relevance to the aerospace community and offers a great opportunity to network with key representatives across government, industry, and academia. The events take place in the Washington, D.C., area, have limited access, and are considered "off the record."



The U.S. Chamber of Commerce Building is located at 1615 H Street NW in Washington, D.C. | Image Credit: APK; Wikipedia; CC BY-SA 4.0

Contact

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Your Regional DDPP is an available resource if you have any questions about these events and activities. The DDPP, who is also a member of the PPC, may also be able to give you some input on what the most relevant aerospace and defense policy issues are at the time.

Additional Guidance for Student Chapters

AIAA strongly encourages student chapters to learn more about public policy and how it will impact their careers in aerospace and defense. Students can join AIAA advocacy events as well! The best way to do this is to connect with the leadership team of the section in which the student chapter is located and talk with them about your interest in public policy. The student chapter can and should help the section organize public policy events and activities, such as those listed in this guide.

Members of Congress often enjoy when students participate in advocacy events. Students are often asked to share what they are studying, what they want to work on, and what their experiences have been. This is an excellent opportunity for students to tie their personal experiences back to the AIAA key issues.

The events and activities that are most recommended for student chapters to lead organization of are:

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- State Aerospace Day
- Meet with Your State Leadership
- Write an Information Paper
- Policy 101 Lunch & Learn
- Lecture on Space or Aviation Policy

Some ideas for Policy 101 Lunch & Learn events organized by students include:

- **Invite a professor from your university to give a lecture** on the current state of space and aviation policy. Review the basic laws, regulations, and agencies relevant to space and aviation policy.
- **Host a roundtable on a specific key issue**, bringing together multiple voices in the field (e.g., from NASA, NOAA, FAA, industry) to share their perspectives on what is the current situation and what could be better.

If you're looking for help identifying guest speakers, contact your local AIAA section, the regional DDPP, and also your university professors or department leadership, who may have connections they can leverage to help you.