

The Women's Policy Institute

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The Women's Policy Institute

- Launched in 2003 by the Women's Foundation of California
- One-year policy training program for up to 30 grassroots women leaders from:
 - Women's health
 - Reproductive rights
 - Environmental health
 - Economic justice
 - Criminal justice

Why the WPI?

- Improve the lives of all Californians, particularly women and girls
- Change the policy process in California to be more open and accessible to community members
- Create a stronger and broader social justice movement in California

WPI Political Philosophy

■ Feminism

- Equal participation of women in the policy process

■ Participatory Democracy

- Broad participation of constituents in making policy, not just voting for policy makers

■ Social Justice

- Creating a society that fulfills human, civil, cultural and economic rights for all people

WPI Training Structure

- Includes four 3-4 day training retreats held over nine months, held in state capital
 - Is highly experiential and hands-on
 - Incorporates 3 modes of learning (hearing, seeing, reading)
 - Incorporates organizational integration
 - Cross-trains on progressive issues
- Uses “real” issues for team policy projects
 - Teams work with mentor

Examples of WPI Projects

- Legislation developed or supported
 - AB 1796 (Leno). Food Stamps for Drug Felons
 - SB 1275 (Ortiz). Infant Feeding Choice
 - SB 1441 (Kuehl). Advocates for Domestic Violence
 - AB 908 (Chu) Ban on chemicals in cosmetics
 - AB 855 (Bass) CalWORKs for some drug felons
 - SB 1569 (Kuehl) Extend public benefits to qualified victims of trafficking, domestic violence, and other crimes
- Fought against proposed budget cuts
- Pushed for legislative hearings on women in prison
- Advocated for focus on nontraditional jobs for low-income women, lobbied for funding, wrote legislative resolution

WPI Goals

- Help fellows develop legislative and administrative policy advocacy skills
- Provide fellows with knowledge and information about California's policy landscape, including legislative and administrative policy processes
- Help fellows overcome perceived barriers and increase their confidence in participating in the policy process
- Provide an opportunity for fellows to develop the relationships and skills necessary to do coalition work that advances public policy

Expected Outcomes

- Produce/create state policy that reflects the needs of California's women, girls, and their communities
- Increase participation in state policy issues by community-based leaders
- Build capacity of fellows and their organizations through ongoing advocacy and policy-related work
- Build community capacity to use the policy process to address problems
- Strengthen relationship and collaboration among social justice organizations and movements in California

WPI Evaluation

- Pre-program survey about experience and attitudes about policy advocacy
- Retreat evaluations to assess quality of trainings, speakers, mentors and staff
- 6 and 12 month post-WPI evaluations to determine overall satisfaction with program and assess the impact of the WPI on ongoing policy work

WPI Success - first four years

- 101 women trained
- 24 teams developed/supported legislation
 - 9 bills signed into law
 - 4 bills passed legislature/vetoed by Governor
 - 5 bills died in legislature
 - 6 projects still active/pending

Impact on Fellows

- Most fellows continued to do advocacy work after the program ended
- Over half of the fellows engaged in one new advocacy activity as a result of the program
- Fellows increased their comfort level in every category of policy action mentioned
- Fellows shared what they learned with their parent organizations

Overview of WPI Retreats

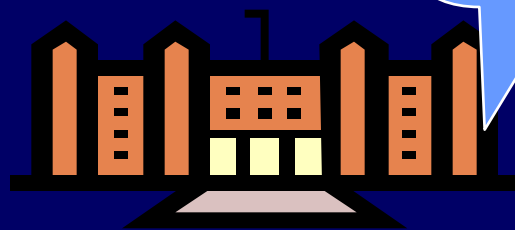


Research
Issues



Holding
Meetings

Retreat Two



Bringing it
home

Retreat Four



Retreat
Three

Advocacy &
Hearings

Retreat One

- Definition and case studies on public policy and policy advocacy
- Briefing on policy activity in each area of interest
- Meet advocates and lobbyists working in each area of interest
- Understand the importance of evidence-based policy advocacy, how to conduct research on potential policy issues and develop a policy research plan
- Form teams with others in each area of interest, learn about group dynamics, & develop a plan for working together

Between R1 & R2



- Research
 - What is current law?
 - What statistics support your position?
 - What do other advocates, legislative staff, and government workers think?
 - What reports exist on the issue?
 - Do you have case examples?
 - What is public opinion?

Retreat Two

- Set up meetings with legislative staff and other advocates
- Practice skills necessary to conduct legislative visits and meetings with other advocates, including the opposition
- Become familiar with the capitol
- Learn about how a bill becomes a law and about the budget process
- Begin to explore various advocacy tools and how to develop an advocacy plan
- Understand the laws pertaining to non-profit lobbying (federal and state)

Between R2 & R3



- Continue Research
- Prepare drafts of needed materials
 - Bill language
 - Background documents
- Write committee testimony

Retreat Three

- Learn about framing their issues
- Participate in a “Mock Legislative Hearing.”
- Learn how to develop financial analyses of a policy project
- Learn about the appropriations committee process
- Learn about California’s annual budget process and tax system

Between R3 & R4



- Lobby/Meet with targets
- Attend hearings, coordinate activities
- Implement advocacy plan to garner support

During Retreat Four Participants:

- Provide updates on their policy projects and share strategies and tools they are using to move their policy project forward.
- Learn about the Appropriations Committee, the Floor of a House, the Governor's desk, and the role of agencies in legislation.
- Engage in a conversation about politics, policy, and social change.
- Hear about working with staff of district offices, getting elected or appointed, and legal advocacy strategies.
- Discuss and share strategies about incorporating policy work in their agency.

After R4



- Lobby/Meet with targets
- Attend hearings, coordinate activities
- Garner support
- Join the WPI Graduate Network!
 - Over 100 graduates using each other as resources, supporting each other's policy advocacy efforts, training and mentoring new classes of fellows

WPI Replication

- Replication manual in final stages of development
- For more information about the WPI and to receive a copy of the replication manual, contact:
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