AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

PUBLIC POLICY OFFICE 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

MARCH 10, 2026

www.aibs.org

Photo Credit: texpan from Getty Images

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

The American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS) remains steadfast in its commitment to advancing the biological sciences for the benefit of both science and society. As the bridge between the research community and the halls of government, our Public Policy Office (PPO) ensures that the voices of biologists are heard where decisions are made. In 2025, a year characterized by extraordinary political and fiscal uncertainty, this mission was more critical than ever.

Throughout 2025, AIBS mobilized the biological sciences community to navigate a rapidly shifting legislative landscape. In response to unprecedented challenges to science-informed policy, we led numerous joint letters, advocacy campaigns, and community forums to protect the integrity of the scientific enterprise. As part of our annual Congressional Visits Day, we facilitated 70 meetings between scientists and lawmakers representing 22 states. These interactions provided a human face to the science, illustrating the local impact of federal research funding. Through our Biological Sciences Congressional District Visits, we empowered scientists to connect with elected officials in their home districts, fostering long-term relationships outside the beltway.

Professional development remains a cornerstone of our office. Following a successful pilot, the AIBS & SURA Public Policy Fellowship entered its second year in 2025. This partnership with the Southeastern Universities Research Association continues to provide early-career scientists with immersive, hands-on experience in the policy-making process. Additionally, our professional development programs trained 184 scientists this year in communication and advocacy, adding to a legacy of over 3,000 alumni who are now better equipped to champion their work to the public and policymakers alike.

Building on the foundation laid in 2024, AIBS continued its leadership in the NSF-funded BIOFAIR Data Network project with the Biodiversity Collections Network (BCoN). Following the

strategic roadmap workshop held in the spring of 2025, we made significant strides in envisioning an integrated, expansive, and open biological and environmental data network. This initiative is vital for ensuring that our nation's biological data remains a robust resource for addressing global challenges.

In 2026, we will continue to serve as the unified voice for biology —protecting the systems that sustain research and ensuring that evidence remains central to our nation's decision-making.

Our work is only possible through the unwavering support of our member societies, organizations, and individual scientists. We thank you for your commitment to the biological sciences and invite you to join us in the critical work ahead.

Jyotsna Pandey
Public Policy Director

Support AIBS by making a donation.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

90

Facilitated 90 meetings between scientists & lawmakers

148

Empowered 148 scientists to become effective advocates for science

184

Provided professional development training to 184 scientists

- Led a coalition of 58 scientific organizations in urging Congress to protect scientific independence and research funding.
- Advocated for sustained federal investment in biological research and education through formal testimony to Congress.
- Worked with our science community partners to defend scientific integrity and funding by opposing grant terminations, mass federal layoffs, agency budget cuts, and threats to the civil service status of career researchers.
- Successfully opposed proposals to terminate the Ecosystems Mission Area within the U.S. Geological Survey and the Institute of Museum and Library Services.
- Mobilized the AIBS community by conducting membership impact assessments, developing shared advocacy talking points and resources, and launching a dedicated Slack workspace to coordinate information sharing and rapid responses to a shifting policy landscape.
- Provided comments to the White House emphasizing the need for sustained and predictable funding, robust federal support for basic research, and a commitment to independent merit-based peer review.
- Sustained the training of future science policy leaders through the AIBS & SURA Public Policy Fellowship and the Emerging Public Policy Leadership Award.
- Facilitated interdisciplinary discussions resulting in a strategic roadmap for integrated biological and environmental data.
- Joined forces with other medical and scientific organizations to reaffirm the safety and impact of vaccines as a cornerstone of public health.

Scientists meeting with Representative Morgan Griffith's (R-VA) staff during Congressional Visits Day

SCIENCE POLICY

AIBS made notable contributions to research and science education policy in 2025. Our efforts focused on promoting federal investments in biological research and education, defending scientific integrity, advocating for evidence-based decision making, and advancing the interests of biodiversity-enabled and biodiversity-related research and education.

Research Funding

AIBS continued its efforts to positively influence federal science funding trends. Biological research and science education funding were the focus of two AIBS advocacy events and several online legislative action campaigns in 2025. In testimony to Congress, AIBS called for sustained investments in the National Science Foundation (NSF), the National

Institutes of Health (NIH), the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Smithsonian Institution, and the Environmental Protection Agency. We also advocated for robust investments in research programs at the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Working with other partner organizations and national coalitions, we successfully pushed back against drastic proposed cuts to science agencies and programs.

Protecting Science

In 2025, AIBS prioritized the protection of the scientific enterprise from political interference. Early in the year, we issued a formal statement opposing Executive Orders (EO) that disrupted research, impeded scientific meetings and review panels, delayed salaries for early-career scientists, and hindered workforce development programs, while calling for an open, independent, and innovative research ecosystem. We also led a coalition of 58 scientific organizations in urging Congress to reject executive actions harmful to the U.S. scientific enterprise.

This work extended to federal grantmaking, where AIBS released a statement demanding scientific integrity in response to mandates for political review of funding opportunities. Legal and administrative actions included signing on to an amicus brief to restore NIH funding for young scientists and submitting comments to protect the civil service status of federal researchers and urging transparency in agency reorganizations. Furthermore, AIBS successfully opposed caps to indirect research costs and endorsed the Financial Accountability in Research (FAIR) model for indirect costs proposed by the Joint Associations Group (JAG).

We fought against the elimination of the USGS Ecosystems Mission Area and Institute of Museum and Library Services; called for sustained support of USGS Climate Adaptation Science Centers and U.S. Forest Service Experimental Forests and Ranges; advocated for the preservation of taxpayer-funded data on federal websites; opposed the dismantling and privatization of NOAA services; and addressed threats to the scientific workforce including student visa restrictions and mass federal layoffs.

Science in Policymaking

AIBS actively collaborated with the science policy community partners to promote evidence-based decision-making. In formal comments to the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, AIBS emphasized that accelerating the American scientific enterprise requires sustained and predictable funding, robust federal support for basic research, and a commitment to independent merit-based peer review. In partnership with broader coalitions we expressed concerns about the White House order on Gold Standard Science, NIH's biosecurity and biosafety policy, and NSF reorganization and cuts.

AIBS was also a vocal advocate for evidence-based public health standards. We joined medical and scientific groups in urging federal leaders to maintain transparent, science-driven processes for immunization schedules. These efforts included strong opposition to the dissemination of non-scientific claims regarding vaccine safety, ensuring that public health standards remain grounded in rigorous scientific data and integrity protections.

Biodiversity and Collections

AIBS continues to lead and support the Biodiversity Collections Network (BCoN), a national initiative that emerged from an NSF Research Coordination Network grant to AIBS. In 2025, the BIOFAIR Data Network project (NSF award no. 2303588), BCoN's latest initiative, achieved a major milestone in its mission to ensure that biological data is findable, accessible, interoperable, and reusable (FAIR) for the global research community.

After organizing a series of virtual listening sessions with a wide range of stakeholders in 2024, BCoN hosted a final virtual interdisciplinary workshop in the spring of 2025, bringing together experts from more than 140 organizations—including leaders in the ecological, climate, genetic, and One Health communities—to finalize a strategic roadmap for an integrated, open biological and environmental data network.

The resulting roadmap identifies five critical priorities: gap analysis, technological capacity, best practices, education and training, and community building. With more than one billion specimens housed in U.S. biodiversity collections, the framework outlines how integrating these records with environmental datasets can unlock transformative research in public health, ecology, and climate science. Achieving this vision requires a

collaborative, inclusive community supported by robust technical infrastructure. The outcomes and strategic recommendations of the BIOFAIR project were shared widely with the scientific community through a featured publication in BioScience and a dedicated episode of the BioScience Talks podcast.

Other Highlights

Early in 2025, AIBS mobilized its membership to address a series of Executive Orders that significantly impacted the scientific research community. Through a dedicated convening of member representatives, AIBS staff presented findings from a member survey assessing the impacts of these executive actions. This session served as a critical platform for sharing resources on effective Congressional communication and facilitating a coordinated, community-wide strategy to safeguard scientific interests.

The 2025 meeting of the AIBS Council of Member Societies and Organizations furthered this mission with the theme, "Navigating the Evolving Science Policy Landscape with Resilience." The meeting featured the Scientist Network for Advancing Policy (SNAP)—an initiative spearheaded by early-career scientists, including past AIBS Emerging Public Policy Leadership Award (EPPLA) recipients. Council members explored strategies for building thriving scientific communities in a shifting policy climate, identifying alternative funding sources, and effective advocacy in a challenging environment. The program also provided a comprehensive analysis of the fiscal year 2026 federal budget, offering attendees actionable insights for engaging effectively with lawmakers and their staff.

Photo Credit: Susan Alberts

OUTREACH AND TRAINING

Meetings with Lawmakers

Each year, AIBS offers scientists opportunities to meet with their elected officials in Washington, DC, and in their home state.

In April, we organized our annual fly-in event, the Congressional Visits Day, where biologists from across the nation met with their federal lawmakers on Capitol Hill. The scientists also participated in a supplemental two-day science communications and advocacy training program to prepare for their meetings. Overall, AIBS facilitated 70 congressional meetings with lawmakers from 22 states to discuss funding for biological research programs.

More than 200 scientists, including graduate students, senior researchers, and educators, from 23 states registered to participate in the 16th Annual Biological Sciences Congressional District Visits event. This grassroots advocacy event encourages scientists across the nation to showcase for federal and state lawmakers the people, facilities, and

infrastructure required to conduct scientific research. In 2025, participating scientists met with their elected officials at the local district office, virtually, or invited them to visit their research facility. In addition to helping schedule district meetings with lawmakers, AIBS policy staff provided online training and one-on-one support to prepare participants for their meetings. The event was made possible by AIBS, with support from event sponsors American Society of Primatologists, Botanical Society of America, Florida International University Institute of Environment, Helminthological Society of Washington, Natural Science Collections Alliance, Organization of Biological Field Stations, Paleontological Society, Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections, and Society for the Study of Evolution.

Notable Meetings Facilitated by AIBS in 2025:

- Congressional Visits Day participants met with Representatives Maggie Goodlander (D-NH) and Joe Neguse (D-CO), as well as Senators Dave McCormick (R-PA), Jerry Moran (R-KS), Katie Britt (R-AL), Mark Kelly (D-AZ), and Jim Risch (R-ID) to discuss funding for biological research.
- Congressional Visits Day participants also met with the offices of Representatives Jamie Raskin (D-MD), Scott Perry (R-PA), Morgan Griffith (R-VA), Barry Moore (R-AL), Troy Balderson (R-OH), Debbie Dingell (D-MI), Bill Huizenga (R-MI), and Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), and Senators John Fetterman (D-PA), Andy Kim (D-NJ), Dick Durbin (D-IL), Roger Marshall (R-KS), Tommy Tubervile (R-AL), Ted Cruz (R-TX), Alex Padilla (D-CA), Patty Murray (D-WA), Chris Murphy (D-CT), Ashley Moody (R-FL), and Maggie Hassan (D-NH), among others.
- Scientists also participated in virtual meetings with offices of Representative Mike Levin (D-CA) and Senator Thom Tillis (R-NC) to discuss the importance of federal investment in the biological sciences.
- Representative Randy Weber's (R-TX) staff toured the University of Houston Coastal Center.
- Congressional staffers with the Maryland delegation toured several biological research labs at Johns Hopkins University.
- AIBS & SURA Public Policy Fellow Anna Rader Groves met with Senator Mark Warner (D-VA) and Senator Raphael Warnock's staff to discuss her research and the importance of sustained investments in science.
- In total, 90 lawmaker meetings were facilitated by AIBS in 2025.

Policy and Communications Training for Scientists

AIBS remains dedicated to providing scientists with the professional skills necessary to navigate the modern research landscape and communicate their work to diverse audiences. Our current curriculum includes our flagship science communications boot camp, an online course to improve writing skills, a training on enabling interdisciplinary and team science, and a boot camp on employment acquisition skills. Most of these programs are typically offered in Washington, DC and around the country on university campuses and at scientific meetings, and are also offered online.

To date, more than 3,000 scientists have participated in AIBS professional development programs. In 2025 alone, 184 scientists engaged with our trainings, with 148 specifically completing our communications and policy engagement curriculum. In addition to our annual Communications Boot Camp in Washington, DC, AIBS successfully delivered customized workshops for the Animal Behavior Society, the Association of Ecosystem Research Centers, and the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences.

Emerging Public Policy Leadership Award

AIBS was proud to present the 2025 Emerging Public Policy Leadership Award (EPPLA) to JP Flores, a Ph.D. candidate in bioinformatics and computational biology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. With the goal of empowering the next generation of science advocates, the EPPLA recognizes graduate students in the biological sciences who demonstrate an exceptional aptitude for working at the intersection of science and policy. As the 2025 recipient, Flores received communications and advocacy training and an expense-paid trip to Washington, DC, to engage directly with his congressional delegation on the importance of federal investment in science. Beyond the hands-on experience in the nation's capital, awardees receive a one-year subscription to the journal *BioScience*. The EPPLA remains a signature program for identifying the next generation of science advocates.

AIBS & SURA Public Policy Fellowship

In 2025, AIBS continued its successful partnership with the Southeastern Universities Research Association (SURA) to offer the AIBS & SURA Public Policy Fellowship. This program provides a unique professional development opportunity for early-career scientists to gain immersive experience in the federal policy arena. Anna Rader Groves, a

Ph.D. candidate in neuroscience at Georgia State University, was selected as the 2025 Fellow. Ms. Rader Groves participated in a month-long in-person fellowship in Washington, DC in July 2025, working closely with AIBS and SURA staff to gain first-hand experience in the advocacy efforts that inform federal decision-making. Ms. Rader Groves worked on a range of projects, including organizing congressional district visits, writing for the Public Policy Report, preparing informative policy documents, and tracking and reporting on legislative developments.

Left: 2025 AIBS & SURA Public Policy Fellow Anna Rader Groves with Senator Mark Warner (D-VA); Right: 2025 Emerging Public Policy Leadership Award recipient JP Flores

Left: 2025 Congressional Visits Day participants in front of the Capitol; Right: Participants from the 2025 Communications Boot Camp for Scientists

Help Support Student Opportunities

AIBS would like to provide more education and training opportunities to biology students across the country. We particularly want to expand our highly successful Emerging Public Policy Leadership Award program and our new Public Policy Fellowship to ensure that more early career professionals may benefit from these programs in the future. To fully fund these programs and provide additional professional development opportunities for students, we need the support of our members and friends. Please consider donating to AIBS to help us ensure more biology graduate students have an opportunity to gain the knowledge and skills needed to develop careers that allow them to successfully work at the nexus of science and public policy.

Please consider making a tax-deductible donation today by visiting https://www.aibs.org/were-stronger-together/

Webinars

AIBS continues to leverage webinars to provide timely education and engagement opportunities for our member organizations. In 2025, we hosted an information session for members of the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists, the Herpetologists' League, and the Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles to share opportunities to engage in AIBS programs and enable effective advocacy with Congress.

We also partnered with the Natural Science Collections Alliance (NSC Alliance) and the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections (SPNHC) to present an educational webinar on the complexities of repatriation in natural history collections. Moving beyond the requirements of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), the program explored the ethical dimensions of voluntary return. Through zoological and botanical case studies, the session featured expert perspectives on the experiences and processes involved in the ethical stewardship and return of scientific specimens.

Recordings of AIBS webinars and other programs can be viewed on our YouTube channel.

Advocacy Resources and Tools

AIBS provides a suite of robust resources designed to empower scientists to engage effectively with the policy process and stay informed on critical developments.

- **Public Policy Report**: Our bi-weekly newsletter provided continuous analysis of federal budget updates and legislative developments throughout 2025.
- **Legislative Action Center**: This online portal empowered hundreds of scientists to advocate for the biological sciences by providing tools to track key legislation and communicate directly with their representatives on timely issues.
- **AIBS Slack Workspace**: Launched in 2025, this new member resource serves as a platform for real-time information sharing and allows for coordinated, rapid community responses to evolving policy landscapes.
- **Science Policy Resource for Students**: Established in 2024, this comprehensive digital hub compiles a thorough list of fellowships, internships, and training opportunities in science policy specifically for biologists studying in the United States.
- **Washington Watch Column**: Published in our flagship journal, *BioScience*, this column continues to explore the latest federal science policy actions, covering critical topics such as research funding, scientific integrity, and workforce development.

Faces of Biology Photo Contest First Place Winner: Heather Frantz

Photo Contest

The AIBS Faces of Biology Photo Contest continues to bridge the gap between the laboratory and the public through compelling visual storytelling. Co-sponsored in 2025 by the Society for Integrative and Comparative Biology (SICB), the competition humanizes the scientific process by showcasing biological research in its many diverse forms and settings. By capturing these personal and impactful moments, the contest helps policymakers and the public better visualize the real-world importance of biological research and education.

The winners of the 2025 contest included photos depicting a graduate student collecting a Spatterdock water lily from a paddleboard to study the medicinal properties of pollen (above); a researcher documenting freshwater jellyfish populations in the lakes of southeastern Michigan (pg. 14); a scientist releasing froglets into a California wet meadow following a week of disease-mitigation treatments (pg. 17); and a researcher observing baboons in the Amboseli basin of southern Kenya (pg. 8). The first-place winner received $250 and will be featured on the cover of an upcoming issue of *BioScience*. To explore the full gallery of winners and learn more about the contest, visit the AIBS website.

GET INVOLVED

IF YOU HAVE A MINUTE...

- Join the AIBS Legislative Action Center
- Subscribe to the Public Policy Report
- Follow us on LinkedIn & Bluesky

IF YOU HAVE 15 MINUTES...

- Read an AIBS position statement on research funding, scientific integrity, climate change, and more
- Delve into science policy by reading an editorial, Feature article, or Washington Watch column from *BioScience*
- Support science advocacy through a small donation to AIBS

IF YOU HAVE 30 MINUTES...

- Learn about federal investments in science and the budget process
- Listen to a BioScience Talks podcast exploring a timely science topic

IF YOU HAVE A DAY...

- Participate in the AIBS Congressional Visits Day in Washington, DC
- Participate in the Biological Sciences Congressional District Visits event
- Coordinate a professional development workshop

STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES...

- Apply for the AIBS & SURA Public Policy Fellowship
- Apply for the Emerging Public Policy Leadership Award

Photo Credit: Claire Kozalr

SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS

The following organizations sponsored AIBS science policy initiatives in 2025.

American Society of Ichthyologists & Herpetologists
@IchsAndHerps

American Society of Mammalogists

ASP

AERC
ASSOCIATION OF ECOSYSTEM RESEARCH CENTERS

BOTANICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA

FIU Institute of Environment
FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

THE HELMINTHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON
Est. 1910

NATURAL SCIENCE COLLECTIONS ALLIANCE

OBFS

Paleontological SOCIETY

The Society for Integrative & Comparative Biology

SSE
SOCIETY for the STUDY of EVOLUTION

SPNHC

SURA

HOW TO CONTRIBUTE

Financial support from individuals and organizations makes it possible for AIBS to serve the biological sciences community and to help advance a common agenda. Consider making a contribution to AIBS. Please visit our website to make a secure online donation.

ABOUT AIBS

The American Institute of Biological Sciences is the national scientific organization dedicated to advancing the biological sciences to promote an increased understanding of all life. Our mission is to promote the use of scientific information to inform decision making and advance biology for the benefit of science and society.

AIBS initiatives are unified by a commitment to promoting informed decision-making. Our strategic priorities include:

- **Publications and Communications** including reliable reports, analyses, and the peer-reviewed journal *BioScience*, which is a forum for integrating the life sciences and educating the public about biological sciences.
- **Scientific Peer Advisory and Review Services** for research proposals and programs sponsored by funding organizations, including the federal government, state agencies, private research foundations, and other non-government organizations, and to educate the community about the science of peer review.
- **Community Programs** that advance the field and profession of biology while promoting and providing leadership, with a particular emphasis on public policy and advocacy, education and professional development, as well as public awareness of science.

AIBS works with any stakeholder that advances the broad field and profession of biology. Organizations partner with us on initiatives, work with us to identify and communicate matters of common concern, and help connect us to their communities for idea and information exchange – particularly regarding public policy, education, public understanding of science, and matters of professional concern.

AIBS has member societies and organizations that support our work financially. AIBS provides services to a wide variety of scientific funding groups that include government agencies, industry, private research foundations, and other non-governmental organizations.

Photo Credit: Ryan Wagner

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