2018 Public Policy Office Annual Report
Director’s Message

The American Institute of Biological Sciences promotes the increased understanding and appreciation of life. Through our public policy initiatives, we endeavor to engage with policymakers such that the decisions they make are responsive to the needs of the biological sciences community. We work to share high-quality, vetted, and actionable scientific information with policymakers so that the decisions they make may be guided by science.

Our work is more important now than at any time in recent history. Sadly, the ease with which faulty information, “alternative facts”, and myth are spread via social and electronic media has never been greater. The scope and negative ramifications of these actions have become more evident in the past few years. The scientific community must find effective and sustained ways to counter the misappropriation of new technology for the misrepresentation and mischaracterization of science. Indeed, in 2018 AIBS published a report from our 2017 Council Meeting during which leaders of our membership discussed these issues, and called for increased collaboration within the community.

As you will read in the following pages, AIBS continues to work with our membership and other partner organizations to advocate for biology. We have also developed programs that increase the capacity of the scientific community to promote science and informed decision-making. Our advocacy events, in Washington, DC, and in state capitals and local communities across the nation, also provide opportunities for individuals to establish relationships with lawmakers that are required if we expect policymakers to consider science when evaluating their positions on the issues of the day. Importantly, too, in 2018, AIBS tackled a number of international issues with ramifications for biological research. For instance, we helped inform the United States Department of State’s position on genetic sequence sharing as governed by the Nagoya
Protocol. We also organized a meeting of our membership to consider international issues influencing scientific publishing and collaboration.

We invite our members and any other individual or organization that values scientifically-informed decision-making and recognizes the importance of investing in biological sciences to join with us in 2019 as we work to more aggressively advance our shared interests.

Robert Gropp, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Key Accomplishments in 2018

√ Helped 165 scientists become more effective advocates for science after they completed an AIBS Communications Training Boot Camp or Science Policy Training course.

√ Increased awareness of the needs of the biological sciences community by facilitating 102 meetings between scientists and lawmakers.

√ Called for increased federal funding for research in testimony to House and Senate.

√ Successfully opposed Administration-proposed cuts to research funding.

√ Provided comments to the Environmental Protection Agency urging that the agency reconsider a proposed rule change that would have limited the use of scientific studies in the regulatory rulemaking process.

√ Helped secure Arizona State Board of Education rejection of proposed science standards removing climate change science and important aspects of evolution science from the high school curricula.

√ Called on the President to nominate a science advisor.

√ Helped secure congressional scrutiny of an Administration plan to relocate the National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

√ Informed Department of State negotiating position on genetic sequence sharing under the Nagoya Protocol.
Science Policy

The AIBS Public Policy Office made significant contributions to research and science education policy in 2018. Our efforts were concentrated on promoting federal investments in biological research and education, advocating for the responsible use of science in the policymaking process, and advancing the policy interests of natural science collections.

Research Funding

AIBS continued its efforts to advocate for increased federal science funding. Biological research and science education funding was the focus of two AIBS advocacy events. AIBS also provided testimony to congressional appropriators regarding funding for the National Science Foundation, the U.S. Geological Survey, the Forest Service, the Smithsonian Institution, and the Environmental Protection Agency.

AIBS worked with other scientific organizations to oppose deep budget cuts to research funding proposed by President Trump, and to secure a bipartisan congressional support to raise federal budget caps for two-years – an action needed to ensure that science budgets were not cut.

Science in Policymaking

AIBS led the life sciences community in pushing back against policies and actions that are harmful to the U.S. scientific enterprise. In 2018, AIBS opposed the Environmental Protection Agency’s proposed rule barring the use of scientific studies in formulating regulations unless the underlying data are publicly available and raised questions and concerns about the Department of Agriculture’s decision to relocate the National Institute of Food and Agriculture outside the national capital region. AIBS will continue to actively monitor these and other situations and to alert the scientific community on how to weigh in.

At the state-level, AIBS urged the Arizona State Board of Education to reject proposed science standards that would remove climate change science and important aspects of evolution science from high school curricula. The Board decided to affirm the teaching of evolution and climate change science in high schools state-wide.
**Biodiversity Collections**

The Biodiversity Collections Network (BCoN), which is supported by a grant to AIBS, organized meetings throughout 2018 that gathered community input to inform the development of a new decadal strategic plan to guide investments in research using digital data from biological diversity collections. The report will be released in 2019. BCoN also grew to include more than 35 organizations that are supportive of its mission.

**Outreach and Training**

**Meetings with Lawmakers**

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

More than 200 biological researchers and educators across 34 states registered to participate in the 10th 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 equipment required to conduct scientific research. In addition to helping schedule district meetings for participants, AIBS policy staff also provided online training to prepare participants for the meetings. The event was made possible by AIBS, with support from event sponsors American Society of Naturalists, Botanical Society of America, Harvard Museum of Comparative Zoology, Helminthological Society of Washington, Natural Science Collections Alliance, Paleontological Society, Society for the Study of Evolution, and Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections.

*Left: Representative Lisa Blunt Rochester (D-DE) learning about invasive insect management. Right: Senator Mazie Hirono (D-HI) planting a tree at the Lyon Arboretum.*
AIBS also organized a Congressional Visits Day in April, where biologists from across the nation traveled to Washington, DC, to meet with their federal lawmakers. The scientists also participated in a supplemental day-long communications training program in addition to a half-day training program on science advocacy and the federal budget. AIBS facilitated congressional meetings for the participants with House and Senate offices to discuss funding for biological research programs.

Representative Jody Hice (R-GA) met with University of Georgia graduate students (Photo credit: Megan Prescott).

Notable Meetings Facilitated by AIBS in 2018

- Congressional Visits Day participants met with Senators Patty Murray (D-WA), James Risch (R-ID), Dan Sullivan (R-AK), Joe Donnelly (D-IN), and Todd Young (R-IN) and Representatives Tom O'Halleran (D-AZ), Raúl Labrador (R-ID), John Faso (R-NY), Kathy Castor (D-FL), and Jody Hice (R-GA) about funding for biological research.
- Senator Mazie Hirono (D-HI) received a tour of the Lyon Arboretum in Hawaii.
- University of Georgia hosted Representative Doug Collins’ (R-GA) Deputy Chief of Staff.
- Representative Jim Cooper (D-TN) toured research labs at Vanderbilt University with graduate students and the Vanderbilt Science Policy Group.
- Representative Lisa Blunt Rochester (D-DE) participated in a tour of U.S. Department of Agriculture's Beneficial Insects Introduction Research Unit in Delaware and learned about invasive insect management.
- In total, 102 meetings were facilitated by AIBS in 2018.
Policy and Communications Training for Scientists

AIBS offered 7 science communications and policy training workshops in 2018 that trained 165 scientists and graduate students. Our current course offerings include a science communications boot camp that teaches participants tools and tips to successfully communicate their research with decision-makers and reporters. We also offered an online course to improve writing skills. These programs are offered in Washington, DC and around the country on university campuses and at scientific meetings.
Emerging Public Policy Leadership Award

AIBS recognized two graduate students in the biological sciences for their achievements in science policy. The Emerging Public Policy Leadership Award (EPPLA) was presented to Joanna “Jo” Downes Bairzin, who is a doctoral candidate in molecular and cell biology at the University of California, Berkeley, and Karena Nguyen, who is a doctoral candidate in integrative biology at the University of South Florida. The 2018 award winners each received an expense-paid trip to Washington, DC, to participate in an AIBS science communications training program and meetings with their congressional delegation, and a one-year AIBS membership.
AIBS Legislative Action Center

Grassroots activists use the AIBS Legislative Action Center to advocate for science policy. In 2018, researchers wrote to their members of Congress to ask for increased funding for the biological sciences. The center also offers summaries of legislation of interest to the biological sciences community and other resources for researchers to engage in the development of the nation’s science policy.

The Legislative Action Center is made possible by financial contributions from the Society for the Study of Evolution and the Botanical Society of America.

Publications and Information Dissemination

AIBS policy staff report on science policy developments through several outlets, including the AIBS Public Policy Report and the Washington Watch column in the AIBS journal BioScience. Start your free subscription at https://www.aibs.org/mailing-lists/.

Help Support Student Opportunities

AIBS would like to provide more education and training opportunities to biology students. We particularly want to expand our highly successful Emerging Public Policy Leadership Award program. In 2018, we were fortunate to receive an anonymous donation of $15,000, but to fully fund the program, 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 they need to develop careers that allow them to successfully work at the nexus of science and public policy.

Please make a tax-deductible donation today by visiting https://memberplanet.com/campaign/aibs/eppladonation.
**Photo Contest**

The Faces of Biology Photo Contest, sponsored by AIBS, continues to draw strong participation from members of the biological sciences community. The contest encourages researchers, educators, and students to showcase biological research in its many forms and settings. The photos are used to help the public and policymakers better understand the value of biological research and education.

The winners of the 2018 contest included photos depicting the use of thermal imaging to analyze the impact of solar irradiation on shark recovery, ecological research being conducted at a long-term experimental site, and researchers examining fish collections. The first-place winner will be featured on the cover of an upcoming issue of *BioScience* and received $250.

![Photo contest first place winner Christopher Brown.](image)

*Photo credits (unless otherwise noted): Jyotsna Pandey*
Get Involved

If you have a minute…

• Join the AIBS Legislative Action Center (policy.aibs.org)
• Subscribe to the Public Policy Report (www.aibs.org/public-policy-reports)
• Follow us on Twitter (@AIBS_policy)

If you have 15 minutes…

• Read an AIBS position statement (www.aibs.org/position-statements)
• Delve into science policy by reading a Washington Watch column from BioScience (www.aibs.org/washington-watch)
• Learn about federal investments in science and the budget process (www.aibs.org/public-policy/science_funding.html)

If you have a day…

• Participate in the AIBS Congressional Visits Day in Washington, DC (www.aibs.org/public-policy/congressional_visits_day.html)
• Participate in the Biological Sciences Congressional District Visits event (www.aibs.org/public-policy/congressional_district_visits.html)
• Coordinate a professional development workshop (www.aibs.org/events/professional_development.html)

Student Opportunities

• Apply for the Emerging Public Policy Leadership Award (www.aibs.org/public-policy/student_opportunities.html)
Supporting Organizations

American Society of Mammalogists

American Society of Naturalists

Association of Ecomorphological and Evolutionary Studies

Biodiversity Collections Network

Botanical Society of America

Burroughs Wellcome Fund

Harvard University

Museum of Comparative Zoology

iDigBio

Integrated Digitized Biocollections

The Society for Integrative & Comparative Biology

SPNHC

Advancing Collections Care

Society for the Study of Evolution

Society of Systematic Biologists

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 https://www.memberplanet.com/campaign/aibs/donate to make a secure online donation.

Zach Randall
About AIBS

The American Institute of Biological Sciences is the national scientific organization that promotes the use of science to inform decision-making that advances biology for the benefit of science and society.

AIBS initiatives are unified by a commitment to promoting informed decision-making. Our areas of focus include:

- **Scientific Communications**: AIBS publishes the scientific journal, *BioScience.* We also conduct communication training programs for scientists, produce monthly podcasts about timely research, and host a Leadership in Biology webinar and meeting series that raises awareness of current topics influencing scientific research and education.

- **Scientific Peer Review and Program Management Services**: The AIBS SPARS program convenes expert panels to review proposed and on-going research. Our clients use these reviews to inform their funding and management decisions. We are also working to identify and promote best practices in peer review through original research we conduct.

- **Science Policy Initiatives**: AIBS provides policymakers with high-quality, vetted information about the latest scientific findings, and about the needs of the biological research and education communities. We do this through congressional briefings, expert testimony, white papers, and coalition and grassroots advocacy initiatives.

Our work and interests span the breadth of the life sciences. We address issues related to fundamental research as well as biomedical and environmental sciences. Collaborators in these efforts include our business partners, clients, and individual and organizational members. A growing number of individual donors also help to advance our goals.

You can learn more about AIBS, how to become a member, or how to make a tax-deductible donation via our [website](http://www.aibs.org).

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