

Public Policy Committee Annual Report, 2023-2024

BSA Public Policy Committee

Andrew Pais (2024)

Ash Gill (2025) *Student Rep*

Travis Marsico (2025)

Taylor AuBuchon-Elder (2026)

Andrea Kornbluh (2026)

Larry Blanton (2027)

Heather Cacanindin, Executive Director, ex officio

The joint committee of the BSA Public Policy Committee held one online meeting in Fall 2023. Follow-up correspondence was initiated by email to relay communications with the ASPT Environmental and Public Policy Committee. Committee members communicated via email and through anonymous polling to participate in the grant evaluation and selection processes in the Spring of 2024.

The Joint Committee's work focused primarily on getting the word out and evaluating the Public Policy Award and Botanical Advocacy and Service Grant.

I. Awards/Grants

Public Policy Award

The BSA Public Policy Award provides two recipients with funding to participate in the Biological Sciences Congressional Visits Day (CVD), which typically takes place in March or April annually in Washington, DC. CVD is a two-day event hosted by the Biological and Ecological Sciences Coalition. The first day includes training provided by AIBS on science funding and how to effectively communicate with policy makers. Participants meet with their Congressional policy makers on the second day to advocate for federal support of scientific research.

The BSA Public Policy Award received two proposals and was provided to Cael Dant (Graduate Student, Northwestern University and the Chicago Botanic Garden) and Jenna Miladin (Graduate Student, University of Arkansas), who both participated in the 2024 Congressional Visits Day and AIBS Boot Camp training.

Future Work for 2024 - 2025

While we had great proposals, we continue to have a small number of applicants each year. Transition in leadership also delayed the time to coordinate on due dates with the public policy committee at ASPT.

Botanical Advocacy and Service Grant

The Botanical Advocacy Service Grant is co-sponsored by both BSA and ASPT (both societies contributing \$500 for a total grant of \$1000). The aim of the grant is to support local efforts that contribute to shaping public policy on issues relevant to plant sciences. The joint committee received seven proposals for the Botanical Advocacy Grant—six of which qualified for evaluation and were shared with members of both committees for evaluation using an online poll.

A runoff vote was required for the top two contenders, which resulted in selection of Susanna Wadgyamar for her proposal titled "Companion ethnobotanical gardens at Davidson College and Catawba Indian Nation".

Future Work for 2024 - 2025

The number of proposals has increased this year. A future goal could be to enhance the proportion of quality proposals by revamping the award call to make the review criteria clearer.

II. *Plant Science Bulletin* content on public policy issues

The Public Policy Committee contributed to the *Plant Science Bulletin* in the Summer 2023 issue (Volume 69, Number 2) by reporting on the experiences of the Congressional Visits Day participants from Spring of 2023. An extension for a write-up regarding the awardee of the Botanical Advocacy Service Grant recipient in 2023 was approved and will be featured in the Summer 2024 issue.

Future Work for 2024 - 2025

- Work with award recipients on providing content for two issues of the PSB in a timely manner. Consultation with the committee in the online summer meeting will be to decide on a 3rd piece regarding a public policy topic with clear consensus among the committee.

III. There were no legislative issues that were tracked by the Committee nor advanced to BSA leadership for consideration in 2024-2025.

Future Work - Committee Organization & Goals

The Committee received a number of new members so the main focus of the Fall meeting was to educate members on the core duties of the committee and make sure those core duties could be fulfilled. Once we've established familiarity with these core functions, it would be ideal to have committee members lead with action items that they want to pursue with committee consensus and support.

Future Work for 2024 - 2025

- One key challenge is to maintain communication across BSA and ASPT public policy committees as leaders retire and new ones are elected/appointed. Continued contact with both the committee leaders as well as copying society leaders in communications may be essential to ensure continuity is maintained as committee composition changes. The question of where to house shared documents is important to consider as well since as of this year, the BSA public policy chair is the one maintaining documents related to activities of the joint committee.
- Having more informational flyers or advocates from our committee present at an information booth at society related functions (both in-person and virtual) could grow membership within the committee and build awareness for the policy related grants/awards. Finding leads to help develop and and participate in promotional activities (at least online will be a primary point of new business discussion.
- It is important to the current chair to find champions within the committee who want to develop initiatives to carry into the upcoming years after the chair has stepped down. This desire has been communicated at the past meeting and is being raised at the next meeting—beginning with requests for writing about a public policy topic related to the botanical sciences.