



Lawyer Chapter Handbook

Thank you for your interest in ACS's Lawyer Chapters. This handbook is intended as a resource for those interested in organizing new chapters and experienced chapter leaders alike. If you have additional questions or suggestions for future editions, please contact us.

Thank you for your time and enthusiasm for ACS.

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I. Introduction: The American Constitution Society

The American Constitution Society (ACS) realizes the promises of the United States Constitution by building and leading a diverse legal community that dedicates itself to advancing and defending democracy, justice, equality, and liberty; to securing a government that serves the public interest; and to guarding against the abuse of law and the concentration of power.

ACS believes that the Constitution is “of the people, by the people, and for the people.” We interpret the Constitution based on its text and against the backdrop of history and lived experience. Through a diverse nationwide network of progressive lawyers, law students, judges, scholars and many others, we work to uphold the Constitution in the 21st Century by ensuring that law is a force for protecting our democracy and the public interest and for improving people’s lives.

Shaping Debate

The American Constitution Society brings together many of the country’s best legal minds to articulate a progressive vision of our Constitution and laws. Through its public programs, publications, and active on-line presence, ACS generates “intellectual capital” for ready use by progressive allies and shapes debates on key legal and public policy issues. This includes over 1,200 live programs, debates, conferences and press briefings across America each year.

The American Constitution Society also aims to debunk conservative buzzwords such as “originalism” and “strict construction” that use neutral-sounding language, but all too often lead to conservative policy outcomes. Using both traditional and new media to communicate with policymakers, judges, lawyers and the public at large, ACS defends the Constitution’s fundamental principles of democracy, equality, liberty, access to justice, and the rule of law.

Building Networks

One of the American Constitution Society’s principal missions is nurturing the next generation of progressive lawyers, judges, policy experts, legislators and academics.

The ACS network is the organization’s heart and soul and its unique asset in helping to build a progressive legal community. It is a source of ideas, innovation, energy, and talent, all focused on achieving a fairer and more just Nation. ACS currently has student chapters at almost every law school in the country, over 40 Lawyer Chapters in both large and small cities across the country, and more than 16,000 paying members and thousands of other supporters.

ACS chapters offer platforms for debate and discussion about both enduring principles and the issues of the day, while providing opportunities for networking, mentoring, and organizing around matters of local and national significance.

Making a Difference

The strength of ACS's ideas and the scope of its nationwide network enable it to make a difference in legal and public policy debates and ensure that law is a force to improve the lives of all people. Recent examples of impactful ACS initiatives and programs include Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg's reference to the negative influence of massive corporate funds in judicial campaigns because of Citizens United. This growing problem was documented by "Skewed Justice," a collaborative research study authored by two law professors, Joanna Shepherd and Michael S. Kang, and ACS.

Lawyer Chapter programs focus on a wide number of issues, including the role of State Attorneys General, the rights of historically marginalized populations, and opportunities for pro bono engagement. Specific events have highlighted the limits and protections under the First Amendment afforded to hate speech on college campuses and the internet, criminal justice reform focused on sentencing guidelines and the criminalization of poverty, creating a more diverse judiciary that reflects the composition of the communities served by both the federal and state bench, and the changing landscape of the federal judicial nominations process.

In addition, ACS regularly convenes its members through its annual National and Student Conventions, as well as a bi-annual Lawyer Convening. At these events, ACS members from across the nation network, share ideas, and hear from experts in the legal field, including U.S. Supreme Court Justices, members of the U.S. Congress, local leaders, and other legal luminaries.

ACS is a non-partisan, non-profit educational organization. We do not, as an organization, lobby, litigate or take positions on candidates or political parties. We do encourage our members to express their views and make their voices heard.

In a Nutshell: The ACS Story

ACS emerged in the wake of the 2000 U.S. Supreme Court decision of *Bush v. Gore*, which held that Florida's election vote recount should cease, effectively naming George W. Bush as the nation's 43rd President. This U.S. Supreme Court decision embodied the height of conservative judicial activism in our nation's history and reflected the well-organized influence of the conservative legal community through shaping and influencing the contours of law and policy on a national level.

In response, the progressive legal community channeled its energies to fundamentally change this conversation, where law and policy could become vehicles of empowerment for all individuals and communities, and not just for the wealthy and powerful. ACS began in 2001 as a student chapter at Georgetown University Law Center and since then, has grown tremendously across the country.

A. Office Locations and Departments

The National ACS Office is headquartered in Washington, D.C. While its primary office resides in our nation's capital, ACS also has staff members based in Athens, Georgia; Chicago, Illinois; Houston, Texas; Los Angeles, California; New York City, New York; and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

The National ACS Office is divided into 6 main departments.

Department of Network Advancement

The Department of Network Advancement is tasked with growing and supporting the ACS network of law students and lawyers throughout the United States. This team works to revive and foster new chapters, support existing ones, and ensure the growth of the progressive legal community by strengthening the student chapters at law schools in universities, both large and small, and the Lawyer Chapters in cities, states, and regions across the country. The Department of Network Advancement also houses two other important projects – State Attorneys General, which focuses on the role of this office in protecting the civil liberties of marginalized communities, and Pro Bono & Volunteer Initiatives, which engages ACS members with various social justice opportunities across the country in furtherance of ACS's mission.

Department of Policy Development and Programming

This department is tasked with developing and implementing national policy for the American Constitution Society, curating, editing, and disseminating issue briefs and blog posts, and creating and facilitating national programs in Washington, D.C. Each member of this team has a portfolio of issue expertise ranging from Criminal Justice to LGBT issues to Reproductive Rights and develops and maintains relationships with coalition partners and other stakeholders on those issues. Moreover, ACS sponsors national conferences, symposia, Capitol Hill briefings, conference calls, and press briefings that bring together ACS members for sustained discussion on particular legal topics. The proceedings of these events are often published and made available as resources for ACS's members.

Department of Communications

The Communications Department ensures that ACS's work is well-represented in all media. Our Communications team works from every communication angle, including our web site, social media, blog posts, Op-Ed pieces, and traditional media to uplift the work of ACS's members and chapter events.

Department of Strategic Engagement

This department houses several important projects, including the [Voting Rights Institute](#), a joint project coordinated by ACS, the Campaign Legal Center, and Georgetown University Law Center, focused on tackling discriminatory voting practices; judicial nominations, centered on federal judicial vacancies; state court issues analyzed in various collaborative reports such as "Partisan Justice" and "The Gavel Gap"; career placement for our ACS members searching for new professional positions in all sectors of the legal profession; and mentorship of our recent

and forthcoming ACS law school graduates who have shown strong leadership skills. ACS student members who would like to further enhance their involvement with the organization can also apply to be part of the [Next Generation Leaders \(NGL\) Program](#).

Department of Development

The Development Department facilitates all of ACS's member donations, annual giving projects, and drafts, submits, and manages all grant project proposals. In turn, these grant projects become ACS's primary substantive issue areas for the upcoming calendar year.

Department of Administration

ACS's Administration team manages the financial and accounting operations of ACS.

B. ACS Organization

Student Chapters

Given their central role in the formation and transmission of legal ideas, and in the shaping of young lawyers, law schools and student chapters therein are a natural place for us to start. We now have chapters at almost every law school in the country. A complete list of ACS student chapters can be found [here](#).

The latest information about our student chapter resources and activities is located [here](#).

Through our student chapters, law students gain a greater understanding of the legitimacy of a vision of the law that gives human values a central place. As new students begin the process of learning to "think like lawyers," we believe the activities of these chapters – through speaker programs, debates, symposia and student meetings – demonstrate to them that rigorous legal thinking does not require the abandonment of such values. Finally, our student chapters create a community for like-minded students, and introduce them to faculty, practitioners, former and current government officials, judges, and public interest advocates who share their values.

Lawyer Chapters

As ACS student members have become lawyers, the number of ACS Lawyer Chapters in major legal markets around the country has grown. Lawyer Chapters provide speaker programs and a forum for discussion and debate of legal ideas outside the law school context, as well as an opportunity for recent law graduates and more senior lawyers to meet and work together. Our Lawyer Chapters also often work with and support local student chapters. For instance, lawyers in our Lawyer Chapters often agree to speak about especially interesting cases or otherwise share their expertise at student chapter-sponsored or cosponsored programs. See our full [list](#) of Lawyer Chapters. If there is no Lawyer Chapter in your area, and you wish to start one, please email us at LCEmails@acslaw.org.

Our Lawyer Chapters govern themselves within the guidelines and policies of ACS. ACS National is available to assist with administrative inquiries, suggest potential speakers, and help with the costs of many Lawyer Chapter programs.

C. **Membership**

Most ACS Lawyer Chapter events are open to all interested participants, and membership in the National American Constitution Society is not a prerequisite for participation in a Lawyer Chapter. However, Lawyer Chapter members of ACS National receive special invitations, regular updates on our activities, access to our job bank, our weekly bulletin, the Harvard Law & Policy review (the official journal of ACS), and Advance, the journal of the ACS Issue Groups. Furthermore, membership recruitment efforts are recognized at the yearly ACS National Convention in June and through an end of the year or beginning of year competition with prizes (including national convention scholarships).

We strongly encourage lawyers to join ACS as a first step in a career-long engagement in the ACS network. In particular, all chapter officers and other interested lawyers should join the national organization. Many announcements, emails and opportunities are sent only to national members of the organization. You best serve your chapter when you are informed about ACS.

We also encourage our members to send job opportunities to LCEmails@acslaw.org so that they can be added to ACS's job bank.

The minimum contribution required for membership in ACS is \$10 per year for students and recent law graduates, \$25 per year for public interest lawyers, and \$50 per year for lawyers in private practice and others. Additional contributions are also encouraged. We are recognized by the IRS as a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational organization.

Lawyers can join online or mail in a printable form with payment directly to the national office. If a lawyer is paying by credit card, then the credit card authorization may be given on their form. If a lawyer is paying by check, then the check should be attached to their corresponding form. We are unable to accept cash.

The promotional flyer, a one-pager on ACS and a membership form, may be downloaded [here](#). If you would like additional promotional materials, please email LCEmails@acslaw.org.

II. Getting Started: For New and Reorganizing Lawyer Chapters

1. Assess the Need

Check with the national ACS office to determine whether a Lawyer Chapter already exists in your area or if an effort to start a chapter has already begun. If a chapter or organizing effort already exists, the national ACS office will put you in touch with the leaders of that effort. A list of Lawyer Chapters is available on our [website](#). (Please note that existing Lawyer Chapters are generally listed here once a chapter launch has been scheduled.)

2. Establish the Network

If there is no Lawyer Chapter in your community, work with the national ACS office to assemble an initial group of people from diverse backgrounds, practice areas and sectors—including government, in-house, law firm and public interest attorneys, law professors, judges, activists and others—who share ACS' values and goals. ACS is strongly committed to building a diverse organization, and it is important that your chapter reflect that commitment from the beginning.

- Important Reminder: Your own personal and professional contacts are powerful resources as you begin to establish your Lawyer Chapter. Make sure to tell your friends and colleagues that you're thinking about starting a chapter—working together, you will be able to create an impressive network!

3. Hold an Organizational Meeting

Hold a community-wide chapter organizational meeting. This can include scheduling your meeting at a time when an ACS representative can attend to talk about ACS, its mission and how we can work together to achieve our common goals. If an ACS representative cannot attend in person, we will work with you on the outline of the meeting, or participate by phone. Please be sure to coordinate with ACS staff in publicizing this meeting. As we do for all Lawyer Chapter events, we will send out information to all ACS lawyer members in your area who have requested information about ACS. This is critical to ensure that involvement in the chapter is open to all. This important principle must be followed with any notices about joining the board, or any steering committee.

4. Form a Steering Committee

Work with your initial group of ACS supporters and the national ACS office to form a Steering Committee. In most cases, an informal Steering Committee structure will be the most efficient means of administering your chapter's activities for the initial period after its founding. After your Steering Committee has been established, the informal Steering Committee often becomes solidified as the Board of Directors.

5. **Select a Chapter Representative**

The Steering Committee should select a Chapter Chair Representative who will be the primary liaison to the national office and will be responsible for providing financial and other information needed by the national ACS office.

6. **Structure Your Organization**

Once your chapter has a firm base of supporters and leadership, prepare a constitution that will serve as the formal structure of your chapter for the coming years. See section II.A for more details.

7. **Fill Your Leadership Positions**

We urge you to find leadership positions for any member who is doing significant work—planning a formal speakers’ program, taking charge of a lunch series, etc. People are more likely to commit substantial time to a project if they are formally identified with it, and members who commit substantial time and effort should be given titles that reflect and facilitate their roles. When it comes time to form a formal board, please work with the staff to have a notice inviting participation sent out by ACS to its list of all members and contacts in your area. The opportunity to join the board must be publicized by the ACS national organization to ensure transparency and that the broadest possible group can join the board. There are several different ways Lawyer Chapters have conducted their elections:

1. Interested candidates can submit a short statement of interest to LCEmails@acslaw.org with information like name, employer, position they’re interested in, past involvement, and why they’d like to serve. We can check membership status and our records on past involvement, and send them to you. Someone from the chapter can then share this information with the group orally at an election meeting, advertised to the Lawyer Chapter email list (candidates should indicate whether they are able to attend this meeting) followed by a majority vote.
2. At an election meeting advertised to the Lawyer Chapter email list, people can share relevant information orally and state which position they would like to hold, followed by a majority vote. For those who are not able to attend, that information can be shared with the group by reading from a short statement of interest, as described above.
3. Members can submit a statement of interest directly to Jampa Lhasawa (jlhasawa@acslaw.org), and we can upload them to a Google form where members can vote electronically. We can check membership status, contact non-members who tried to vote, circulate the election information to the list, etc.

4. Some chapters do a more formal application process, circulating full forms to everyone to review, etc. If this is your preference, we can assemble and circulate them, but this approach isn't required.

8. Plan and Execute Events

Together with your Steering Committee, plan and execute consistent, quality programs. Please inform the national office of the details of your event no less than four weeks in advance of the event and prior to posting about it on social media, such as Facebook or Twitter. Events must be advertised by ACS so that they can be counted as chapter activities, and to ensure the widest possible audience. Although chapters may send limited emails to the email list, those emails should not exceed one message per quarter (or one per month for more active chapters). The primary means of promoting events should be via ACS-sent emails and local social media and one-on-one outreach.

9. Think About the Future

Make connections with law school students, recent law school graduates and other new members of your legal community to ensure a continuing fresh flow of ideas and connections for the ACS network. Think creatively to develop programming that will engage, energize and enlarge your community and secure the promise of the ACS mission.

Chapter Structure

A. Chapter Constitution

The national ACS office asks that you prepare a constitution for your chapter. Consult with the national ACS office early on to ensure that your draft constitution is consistent with ACS's mission and policies or to obtain a copy of an existing constitution. The constitution will govern your chapter's operations and set out the structure for the chapter. It also includes a list of the founding Board or Steering Committee members.

Your Lawyer Chapter constitution should contain a mission statement that is consistent with the mission and goals of ACS. Committing the mission statement and general operating procedures to writing is a valuable exercise and may help to avoid – or settle – disputes in the future. Please refer to ACS's [template constitution](#), which is based on the constitutions of some of our chapters. You should feel free to borrow from it liberally, even entirely, or to use it for your own creative ideas.

B. Leadership Positions

The way you organize your Lawyer Chapter and define leadership roles is up to you. Larger Lawyer Chapters, for example, tend to have more than one programming chair. If your Lawyer Chapter conducts an annual fundraiser, appointing a fundraiser chair may also be helpful. (Note that fundraisers may only be held with the approval and assistance from the national organization.)

Regardless, we strongly recommend these formal leadership positions:

- **President/Chapter Chair/Chapter Co-Chairs**
- **Vice President/Vice-Chair**
- **Programming Chair**
- **Membership Chair**
- **Liaison to Local Student Chapters**
- **Student Chapter Representatives to the Lawyer Chapter's Board of Directors**
- **Diversity and Inclusion Chair**
- **Social Media Chair**

Once your Board of Directors has been established, please update ACS national by emailing LCEmails@acslaw.org with a list of members' names, titles, email addresses, and employers.

This is critical to ensure communication with and recognition for your Board. Boards are listed on each Lawyer Chapter's website, and will receive invitations to join the ACS Lawyer Chapter leaders email list to receive important updates from the national organization.

C. Boards of Advisors

Many Lawyer Chapters find it beneficial to form a board of advisors to serve as a resource for the board of directors, which is responsible for the day-to-day activities of the chapter. A board of advisors can be helpful in establishing your chapter, providing credibility within your legal community, and assisting in recruiting speakers, securing event space, and if your chapter holds an annual fundraiser. **Before forming a board of advisors, it is critical that you speak with ACS staff before any invitations to serve have been issued.**

Along with the same issues (such as diversity) that are important to keep in mind in recruiting a board of directors, boards of advisors have unique factors such as length of terms and clearly defined responsibilities with which we want to assist you.

D. Relationship With Other Chapters – Student to Lawyer Chapter Pipeline

We strongly encourage all Lawyer Chapters to build a strong relationship with student chapters in their area. This is beneficial from a networking and programming perspective. For example, if your chapter is planning an event and is inviting a speaker from out-of-town, send an email to the student chapter leaders in your area advising them of the same. Perhaps you can cosponsor the event, or the student chapters can invite that speaker to participate at another event at its law school. Visit our [website](#) to find contact information for the student chapter leaders in your area.

Furthermore, each Lawyer Chapter board should include a liaison to the student chapters, as well as a student representative from each student's chapter.

These measures all help to strengthen the **Student to Lawyer Chapter Pipeline**, in which student leaders involved with their student chapter in law school more readily become members and leaders of their respective Lawyer Chapter upon graduation. In addition, the interconnectedness between the Lawyer Chapter and the surrounding student chapters helps to build a strong sense of community among progressive law students and attorneys, and helps achieve ACS's goal of building the progressive lawyer network.

E. Lawyer Chapter Website

Generally, once ACS leaders among your legal community have been identified to launch or revive your Lawyer Chapter, a website will be created where new and current members can find your contact information and any upcoming event details. Previously held programs are also archived here, too. The members of your Board of Directors and Board of Advisors are also displayed here as well once they are chosen, either through an election or meeting selection.

You can find your Lawyer Chapter as well as other Lawyer Chapters across the country on ACS's website. All Lawyer Chapters are organized by state and can be found [here](#).

Please check your Lawyer Chapter website periodically and communicate any updates to LCEmails@acslaw.org.

III. Lawyer Chapter Activities

Every Lawyer Chapter is encouraged to hold programs at least quarterly within the guidelines set forth below. Be sure to refer to the event checklist for a helpful framework you can customize for every event. The checklist can be found [here](#).

A. Programming Policies

Prohibition on Partisan Activity

ACS is a non-partisan, non-profit 501(c)(3) educational organization. As a 501(c)(3) organization, ACS and all ACS chapters are prohibited from directly or indirectly participating in, or intervening in, any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office, party or other political organization.

This is an absolute prohibition – under the federal tax code, participation in a political campaign as a non-profit entity is grounds for revocation of an organization’s tax exemption even if it does not form a substantial part of the organization’s activities.

While speakers at ACS-sponsored events are free to promote or criticize ideas or policies, we cannot permit statements or activities that constitute endorsements of candidates or political parties. These restrictions apply to all events or publications hosted or sponsored by ACS. Thus, chapters sponsoring events must ensure that speakers do not express any views that could be reasonably interpreted as endorsing any candidate or party in an election.

One of the many benefits of ACS’s non-partisan status is that it permits judges to participate as Lawyer Chapter members by attending events, serving as panelists for various programs throughout the year, and even making financial contributions at various ACS Lawyer Chapter fundraisers. Because of ACS’s non-partisan status, judges are more at ease with maintaining a strong presence in ACS and, equally important, participation does not contravene federal and state judicial codes of ethics that prohibit a judge’s involvement in partisan organizations and activities.

ACS chapters – both lawyer and student – should provide all speakers, especially those speaking on topics that might raise issues under this policy, a copy of our [speaker release form](#) for their signature, in advance of their respective program. This form reminds speakers of ACS’s policy and the applicable legal requirements and requests their permission to record and distribute footage and/or transcripts of the program (if applicable).

ACS Lawyer Chapters can and should host discussions, debates and forums on a wide variety of topics, including those that touch on current legal and public policy controversies and the political process. **However, it is imperative that your ACS Lawyer Chapter does not engage in**

or appear to engage in political activity, and that your chapter does not endorse or appear to endorse candidates for public office at any level.

Some Basic Programming Do's and Don'ts:

- **Do** organize creative programs featuring persuasive and inspiringspeakers.
- **Do** notify the national office of programs by sending your events' details four weeks in advance of the program to LCEmails@acslaw.org.
- **Do** partner with diverse organizations to facilitate discussions, debates, and forums.
- **Don't** cosponsor rallies, demonstrations, or fundraisers for individuals or groups engaged in promoting or opposing candidates or political parties.
- **Don't** make or solicit, as a Lawyer Chapter or in your capacity as an ACS leader or member, a contribution to the political campaign of a candidate, party, or other political organization. An ACS chapter may cosponsor an event with a political organization (e.g., the local Democrat or Republican party), but if the political organization engages in any of the abovementioned activity for a particular event, ACS leaders or members may only participate in their individual capacities, not in their capacity as ACS leaders or members.
- **Don't**, as a Lawyer Chapter, lend employees and/or persons in their official capacity as ACS members to work on a candidate's or party's political campaign.
- **Don't**, as a Lawyer Chapter or in your capacity as an ACS leader or member, email, publish or distribute written or printed statements, or make oral statements, on behalf of, or in opposition to, a candidate, party, or political organization.
- **Don't**, as a Lawyer Chapter, formally endorse a political candidate.
- **Don't**, as a Lawyer Chapter, sponsor or organize voter registration drives, unless the effort is being led and organized by a 501(c)(3) organization trained to conduct such drives, such as Election Protection, League of Women Voters, or Rock the Vote.

If you have any questions regarding this or any other matter, please contact the ACS Lawyer Chapters Team at (202) 393-6181 or via email at LCEmails@acslaw.org.

B. Purpose of Lawyer Chapter Activities

1. *Further a progressive vision of law and policy.* Lawyer Chapter activities influence how current and future lawyers, judges and policymakers think about, interpret, and implement the law. They are the vehicles through which progressive ideas are developed, articulated, and disseminated. Chapter programs provide an influential group of expert leaders with the analytical tools to further progressive laws and policies and counter conservative ideology. Lawyer Chapters provide opportunities for members to work on research, writing, and other concrete projects originated by members, the national ACS office or ACS partner organizations, to bring about positive change and social transformation.
2. *Build and expand the ACS network.* Lawyer Chapters are integral to the creation and growth of a powerful national network of moderates, progressives, and liberals committed to working together to protect and foster the core American values of liberty, justice, equality, and the rule of law. Through programs, mentoring, and collaborative projects, members of various ages, backgrounds, and experiences create the strong relationships that are vital to building a progressive movement.

Accordingly, ACS Lawyer Chapters should continue to engage in organizing and membership recruitment efforts to expand the ACS network on the local and national level. Chapter activities such as monthly lunches may be used as opportunities to build bridges with other communities and diversify membership. Your programming should reflect those efforts.

C. Types of Lawyer Chapter Activities

Programming

Core Lawyer Chapter activities are designed to disseminate ideas and provide ACS members with the tools to articulate intellectually rigorous, progressive views of law and policy, such as:

- Monthly lunchtime single speaker programs that bring together chapter members and others to listen to an expert speaker make a short presentation on an important legal issue, followed by rigorous, lively discussion, and debate among all present;
- Substantive programs (such as panel presentations on contemporary topics);
- Timely programs in response to recent court rulings, legal developments, or pressing issues, such as a program cosponsored by your state ACLU in the aftermath of a contentious U.S. Supreme Court decision; and
- Reading groups, get-togethers, social activities, and brownbag lunches tailored to the interests of your chapter.

Offering **Continuing Legal Education Credits (CLE)** is a great way to attract busy attorneys to your programs because it enables lawyers to work towards fulfilling their state bar licensing requirements while simultaneously participating in an ACS Lawyer Chapter event. We encourage you to secure CLE credit for your events. While ACS National cannot make blanket promise for all requests, the national office is generally able to pay for the application fees associated with securing CLE credits for an event. Please refer to the CLE guidelines on the ACS Lawyer Chapter Website for more information on obtaining CLE credits for your substantive programming [here](#).

For all programming (as well as networking events and projects, described below), we strongly encourage you to do outreach and publicity in addition to the emails the national staff will send to your chapter email list, such as inviting other legal and community groups to cosponsor and promote the event to their membership database.

Networking Events

Your chapter is also encouraged to host events designed to build relationships among ACS Lawyer Chapter members and between members and the broader progressive community, such as:

- Substantive and social events with local ACS student chapters, including mentoring activities; and
- Substantive and social events cosponsored with other groups that share a progressive vision of the law, such as specialized bar associations, public interest organizations, and advocacy groups.

Whether a happy hour for members of progressive legal organizations or a service activity with a local student chapter, be sure to offer a range of activities to appeal to a broad cross-section of your local legal community.

Projects

These activities enable many chapter members to work for change in the community and participate effectively in the public policy process on the local, state, and national levels, such as:

- Researching and writing articles, white papers, or op-eds on topical legal issues;
- Constitution in the Classroom;
- Reviewing and reporting on judicial opinions in members' areas of expertise;
- Working on projects initiated by chapter members or other progressive organizations. Lawyer Chapters can serve as a clearinghouse to connect members with concrete opportunities to effect change. Examples include member-initiated amicus briefs that do

not suggest any ACS affiliation (ACS and its chapters may not sign onto such briefs, but individuals may use ACS connections to generate support for amicus projects); and

- Ongoing litigation or other projects initiated by public interest organizations other than ACS that benefit from the intellectual firepower and legal skills of ACSmembers.

D. Audience for Your Activities

In general, ACS Lawyer Chapter events (as opposed to chapter business meetings) should be open to anyone who wants to attend, provided any applicable admission fee is paid. This means your events may attract attendees who disagree with the core values of ACS. Members of the media may also attend your programs.

E. Publicizing Your Chapter and Member Activities

The national ACS office can assist you with outreach, publicity, and media coverage. It is important that you please let us know when you are planning your activities so that we can format and distribute emails to those who have expressed an interest in attending events in your area, consider whether funding might be available, suggest cosponsors, and help you engage potential audiences and the media. Below are some general guidelines we use when publicizing Lawyer Chapter activities. Please refer to our [model calendar](#) as a template for planning the calendar year.

1. ***Lawyer Chapter events.*** At least one month prior to a chapter event, inform the national ACS office of your event details so that an announcement and RSVP information can be prepared and distributed via email. Please submit the event information to ACS's Chapters Fellow, Jampa Lhasawa (jlhasawa@acslaw.org). To avoid mistakes, please do not forward email chains with event information sprinkled throughout; please send one email and include the following information:

- Date
- Start and end time
- Location (including address and room number)
- Event title
- Speaker name(s) and title(s)
- Speaker photo
- Any cosponsors
- Any CLE information
- Any other relevant information (parking information, whether participants should bring their own lunch, etc.).

This gives us time to post your event on the ACS website, format and circulate emails, and generally advertise it well in advance.

Please remember that Lawyer Chapter emails are never sent on Fridays and are generally not sent on Mondays. To ensure that the email goes out beginning when you would like, please submit all information no later than the Wednesday of the preceding week. Same day and even next day emails are often not possible due to other obligations or other scheduled emails. **Please plan ahead.**

2. **Member activities.** Please let the national ACS office know about chapter members' individual work and projects, such as articles, amicus briefs, op-eds, and relevant blog posts. As well as sharing information within our network, the national ACS office also may be able to assist you and your members with outreach or publicity, including posting papers, articles, and other publications on the ACS website.
3. **Social Media and ACS:** Share your ideas and publicize upcoming activities by posting them on your Lawyer Chapter's ACS Facebook page, and encouraging your board members to share them on their Facebook pages. Furthermore, you may find that following other Lawyer Chapters on Facebook provides excellent resources for programming and publicity suggestions. Twitter and LinkedIn can also be good places to publicize chapter events.

F. **Financial Support for Lawyer Chapter Activities**

1. **Fundraising and Membership.** Your chapter is expected to work with the national ACS office to fundraise and solicit membership in your community. Donors may make tax-deductible contributions to the national American Constitution Society, which is a 501(c)(3) educational organization. Contributions can be made by check or by credit card through our [website](#). Contribution and member interest forms designed to help you build membership and identify issues of particular importance to your chapter can be found on the Lawyer Chapter leadership [resources page](#).

In order to coordinate fundraising efforts by ACS and its Lawyer Chapters, each chapter is required to consult with the national ACS office before engaging in any fundraising event, solicitation, campaign, or activity. **Lawyer Chapters may not fundraise independently.** Please contact the national ACS office if you are considering fundraising on behalf of ACS.

2. **Self-Supporting Activities.** Many of your events may be organized as self-supporting activities using one or more of the following approaches:
 - a. **Events with an attendance fee.** You may consider charging a nominal fee to cover the costs of some Lawyer Chapter events. For example, attendees at monthly lunches normally pay for the cost of the lunch, unless the lunch is underwritten as part of a particular program or contributed by another organization or individual.

- b. **Cosponsored events with student chapters.** Student chapters may be able to offer a venue, access to faculty speakers and, in many cases, school funding to subsidize joint Lawyer Chapter/student chapter ACS events.
 - c. **Coordinated appearances for out-of-town speakers.** Working with area student chapters and other organizations, you may be able to invite speakers to participate in ACS events at a nominal or shared cost by identifying speakers who are scheduled to be in your town for other pre-existing commitments, such as a book tours, moot court competitions, conferences, speeches, alumni events, or award ceremonies.
 - d. **Using law firm resources.** Many law firms are willing to make conference rooms or other large spaces available at no cost for ACS speaking programs, brown bag lunches or receptions. This may be particularly true if your programming relates to one of the firm's key practice areas or pro bono specialties, and/or include law students. On occasion, firms are also willing to provide refreshments, including snacks or lunch.
3. ***Funding Requests and Shipping of Materials.*** To access ACS national funds such as for food, beverages, or audio-visual equipment, you must receive pre-approval from the national office for specific expenditures. Requests for funding should be received at least **two weeks** in advance of the event. In order to best conserve our resources, it is the policy of ACS to not overnight ship materials or supplies (such as informational materials and pocket constitutions. **Please plan ahead and note that the national ACS office and its affiliates, including student and lawyer chapters, are prohibited from paying honoraria or fees to any speaker.**
4. ***Speaker Travel and Accommodations.*** Requests for speaker travel funding must be made before an invitation is issued. Please email LCEmails@acslaw.org with your funding request. The ACS National Office will notify your chapter of what amount it has been approved to spend. In order to meet the funding needs for more than 40 Lawyer Chapters, ACS asks that you take a reasonable approach to your event planning. ACS cannot approve unnecessarily expensive funding requests. For example, any expenses covering the guest's overnight hotel stay should not exceed \$200 without a compelling reason. Additionally, we will reimburse only reasonable coach fare for airplane and train travel for speakers with advanced approval. Please therefore plan your events well in advance so that the best rate can be obtained and follow up with speakers to ensure they've made those arrangements in a timely manner. In certain situations, ACS staff may need to work directly with speakers on their arrangements.

5. **Reimbursement Policies.** In order to receive reimbursement for an event, the Lawyer Chapter must complete the [reimbursement form](#), along with all of the applicable receipts, and email it to LCEmails@acslaw.org.
- a. **All reimbursements must be submitted within 30 days of an event to LCEmails@acslaw.org.** Expenditures that are not pre-approved are not eligible for reimbursement.
 - b. **Please note that gratuity for all expenses, where appropriate, should not exceed 15%.** If applicable, please submit your state's tax exemption form and paperwork (provided by ACS National) directly to the vendor so that the Lawyer Chapter can avail itself of its tax-exempt status.
 - c. Moreover, if possible, the National ACS office is happy (and prefers) to pay for approved expenses for Lawyer Chapter programs – either before or after an event – using its American Express credit card. This option should be used for all travel accommodations (airplane tickets, hotel rooms, etc.) and, where applicable, for all venue, food, and beverage expenses. Please provide our [Tax Exempt Letter](#) to the vendor. If the total amount due is over \$500, you must get and submit to us a completed [W-9 Form](#) from the caterer (e-mail LCEmails@acslaw.org to receive a copy of these forms). This process eliminates the paperwork involved and prevents Lawyer Chapter members from waiting to receive a reimbursement check.
 - d. **Checking Accounts: As a result of IRS regulations, ACS Lawyer Chapters may not have accounts of any kind bearing the name of the American Constitution Society for Law and Policy or otherwise on behalf of the American Constitution Society at any banking institution.** This includes banking accounts for your Lawyer Chapter of the American Constitution Society.
 - e. **Please note that the national ACS office and its affiliates, including student and lawyer chapters, are prohibited from paying honoraria or fees to any speaker.**

G. **Administrative Details**

Many lawyers already are well versed in the details required to plan a Lawyer Chapter event. Since some of those details vary from event to event, we cannot set out full particulars here, but we do have an [event checklist](#) which further explains the basics of planning a speaker program:

- **Plan ahead:** Many speakers – especially those most in demand – will need several months' notice to clear their calendars and prepare a talk. Give yourself more than three months to plan if possible. For example, spring is not too early to begin planning a fall event, and planning for a spring event can begin as soon as early fall.

- **Pick a date carefully:** To some extent, speaker availability will guide your selection of a date. Additionally, planning events around the Thanksgiving and winter holidays, for example, should be avoided. Be sure to check for competing events.
- **Pick a venue carefully:** You can never be sure exactly how many people will attend your event. Err on the low side in picking a venue. It usually is better to have too many people in a small room than too few people in a big room: both speakers and audience members should feel that they have been part of a popular and well-attended event.
- **Advertise extensively:** Start with your Lawyer Chapter. ACS National will send out weekly emails to our database for that Lawyer Chapter. Please note that it is the policy of ACS National to only send one email for each Lawyer Chapter per week, Tuesday through Thursday (the ACS Weekly Bulletin is sent each Friday to every ACS member, and the student chapter announcement is sent each Monday). ACS's advertising should also be supplemented in your Lawyer Chapter's Facebook group. View our [social media guide](#) for more information on best practices for social media.
- **Take Pictures:** Please take pictures and share them with us at LCEmails@acslaw.org.

At the event:

- **Consider providing food:** Obviously, you don't need to provide a full meal at your program; however, some snacks advertised on the flyer may help draw a larger crowd.
- **Be sure to take good care of your speakers:** Stay in touch with your speakers as you plan your event. Keep them posted on the details of the event and check on travel arrangements, if necessary. Offer to pick them up and drop them off at airports or train stations. If they are arriving early in your city, see if you can offer them an office in case they want to get some work done. Get a parking permit for them.
- Additionally, don't forget to follow up with thank you notes and news or copies of any favorable reports of the event. **If they are entitled to a reimbursement, please make sure to send the complete reimbursement form and receipts to LCEmails@acslaw.org within 30 days of the event.**

IV. Diversity-Friendly Practices for Lawyer Chapters

As new people join the legal profession, many will decide within the first few days or weeks where to put their extracurricular time and energy. To assist you in recruiting and maintaining a chapter membership rich in diversity, we want to suggest some practices that you may find helpful. Some of these suggestions may seem obvious, but taken together they constitute an approach that can make your chapter more welcoming for all.

A. Aspects of Diversity

Diversity means understanding and valuing the characteristics and beliefs of people from a wide range of communities while ensuring their participation, including people of different ethnic and racial backgrounds, gender, physical abilities, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, socio-economic status, religious and spiritual values, and national origin. Diversity within the scope of ACS's mission also means reaching out and including a broad array of lawyers in your chapter who work across the various fields of the legal profession, including government, in-house, law firm and public interest attorneys, law professors, judges, and grassroots activists.

B. Recruiting

Take the time to focus on each person who seems interested in ACS, in what ACS does, and in what ACS has to offer them. Make your ACS chapter a home for any lawyer who shares a commitment to progressive values.

C. Planning and Programming

The first program or two that the ACS Lawyer Chapter sponsors each fall as new lawyers join your legal community will tell new Lawyer Chapter members a great deal about what the chapter is all about. You may want to be more deliberate about producing the first one or two programs on a subject that holds appeal for a diverse audience. You should always strive for diversity among the panel of presenters. Similarly, the program materials should describe the program in a way that appeals to a broad audience.

In terms of planning the year's programs, one dynamic to conscientiously avoid is one in which certain Lawyer Chapter members become isolated with all of the work to put on a particular program. Ideally, leaders should engage in a process for identifying core teams of lawyers to work together on each program that the chapter agrees to sponsor.

D. Constitution in the Classroom (CITC): A Unique Opportunity for a Diverse Initiative

While ACS prides itself on diversity in terms of membership composition, diversity in programming also furthers this initiative. Many ACS members who are not able to commit to serving as a chapter chair or other board member enjoy [ACS's CITC program](#) because it entails a smaller time commitment, but still enables an enriching professional opportunity focused on educating our nation's children and youth about the robust nature of the U.S. Constitution.

[ACS's CITC program](#) facilitates ACS volunteers to teach children and youth in schools across the country about the U.S. Constitution, its history, and applications in contemporary society. The curriculum, tailored to the student's grade level in primary and secondary schools, centers on constitutional principles such as equal treatment, dignity, fairness, and justice under the law for all individuals and communities.

E. Advertising

Develop materials with an eye toward diversity. Consider what the materials say about ACS, what ACS does, and who is and should be a member of ACS. Not only do we welcome diverse membership into our network, the programming that we put on must reflect our progressive ideals, and desire to uplift the voices and talents of BIPOC. Thus, the materials used to advertise chapter events should convey that message through the images and language used.

Additionally, please be sure that the events we advertise include content that is accessible to the majority of people with disabilities without requiring them to ask or do extra research to gain more information about the event.

For advertising specifically, please try to incorporate the following things:

- Provide descriptions of images or graphics.
- Provide event details regarding the accessibility of a venue if it is being held in person.
- If you are advertising via a PDF flyer, please ensure that the material is accessible through screen readers; i.e. this might include not using bullet points.
- If you are using hashtags, be sure to capitalize the first letter of the phrase, ex: #Voting.
- For more recommendations on accessibility features please click [here](#).

F. Meeting

The ACS network truly puts on some amazing programming. With that said, it is important to make sure that all those who are invited to attend events, and even those who take the time to plan such events, feel welcomed and included in the conversation. Here are a few examples of how diversity can be uplifted in a few different meeting formats.

- Virtual Meetings:
 - Zoom Webinar
 - While webinar formatted meetings limit interactions between panelists and the event attendees, it is important that the interaction between the panelists is welcoming and that an inviting atmosphere is created. When beginning the webinar allow time for panelists to introduce themselves in the green room so that they feel as if they are in community with one another.
 - If you or someone else will introduce the panelists, please be sure to ask them the pronunciation of their names and the pronouns that they prefer to be called.
 - When the actual webinar has started be sure to allot equal time to

- panelists, especially people of color. Be sure that all panelists have had a chance to speak and thank them for their input so that they feel valued.
- If questions are allowed for the webinar, please be sure to monitor them and regulate inappropriate questions that may be geared toward certain panelists. While we understand that trolls are everywhere and cannot always be stopped prior to committing offenses, it is important that panelists feel safe as they engage with the public.
 - Also, please be sure to ask panelists prior to the event if they need anything for accessibility purposes and be sure that the webinar is also accessible for attendees with disabilities as well. For more recommendations on accessibility features please click [here](#).
- Zoom Meeting
 - Unlike Webinars, zoom meetings allow for more interaction with panelists and attendees and therefore it is important to foster a welcoming environment.
 - At the start of the event please make sure that panelists and attendees have introduced themselves and that their names and preferred pronouns are listed below their picture.
 - Do not pressure attendees to turn their camera or volume on. Given the pandemic and the blurred lines between one's social and professional space, there are many reasons people may choose to leave these features turned off, which in no way indicates that they are not present and actively listening to the program.
 - Please be sure that all voices are welcomed in the space and that no one is being passed over via discussion or favored over others who may want to offer input and/or ask a question. To be sure that this does not happen, utilize the raise hand option, and make sure to establish a tone of respectability prior to the start of the discussion.
 - Do not pressure people to speak. While zoom meetings encourage interaction, sometimes people can be a little shy around certain topics and may simply want to listen. Do not fear, this is OKAY! Additionally, do not posit certain topics to people because you think that they might have experience about a topic. Ex: do not ask someone of a particular race to speak or offer insight on a racial topic just because you believe they might have knowledge. This can be exclusionary and often puts people in an uncomfortable situation.
 - If the chat box feature is on, it is important to state upfront what kinds of comments are allowed or not, because unlike a zoom webinar, the chat feature within a zoom meeting has fewer limitations. While we cannot always catch trolls before they strike, it is important to establish up front the expectations for the event.
 - Please be sure that when using someone's name you are pronouncing it correctly. If you are unsure be sure to ask them how to pronounce their name.

- Please be sure to see how you can make the event more accessible to attendees. For example, if you are sharing your screen or playing audio, check prior to the event to ensure that your content is visible and can be heard. Additionally, use captions if possible. For more recommendations on ways to incorporate accessibility features please click [here](#).
- Please note that the previously listed recommendations can also be used on platforms such as Skype, Teams, Whova, and other virtual chatrooms.
- In-Person
 - While the COVID-19 pandemic has limited the amount of physical interaction we can have, some people have begun to slowly connect in-person again. That said, we want to ensure that in-person connecting is not only engaging but inclusive for all attendees.
 - When planning in-person events please be sure that everyone has a chance to be introduced. Although chapter leaders always have a great deal to discuss with each other, be aware that meetings that appear to others to be a “private club” are not as welcoming as those meetings genuinely designed to engage each person.
 - At in-person events, if a dialogue is taking place, be sure to seek diverse input and perspectives.
 - Be sure that the venue that has been selected is one that is inviting for all groups of people and have gender neutral or single occupancy restrooms.
 - Be sure that all venues that are selected are accessible to people with disabilities. Also make sure that any presentation that is done is accessible. If possible, try to incorporate captions, microphones, and other accessories that might aid people who are visually and hearing impaired. For more recommendations on ways to incorporate accessibility features please click [here](#).
 - For events try to plan diverse topics where all who attend will be able to join in and not feel left out.

G. Leadership Planning Meetings

At ACS we recognize that innovative ideas come in a variety of formats, so when it comes to planning events it is important to make sure that all those involved feel as if they have a voice, and that their input matters. When planning events amongst yourselves, or even when soliciting the help of outside organizations or individuals, please try to incorporate the following within planning meetings or discussions:

- Be intentional about who you are inviting to the events. It is important to make your programming reflective of the world and therefore be sure to invite diverse speakers.
- If possible, try to schedule your programming at different times than other Lawyer Chapters so that attendees are not forced to choose between the awesome programming that we put on.
- Be mindful of the times that events are scheduled for your chapter. Try to ask yourselves, will this time work with lawyers who may be parents, work full-time jobs, or have

contributions to make elsewhere. This is not to say that you must only choose a date and time that works for everyone, but this type of thinking encourages higher turnout.

- Solicit program ideas or input amongst your board and be careful not to be dismissive of ideas; actively listen and solicit more information about why a fellow lawyer believes their program idea would appeal to a larger audience. In making plans to go forward, try to make certain that each person has a role of their own choosing.
- Plan the meeting in a way that genuinely includes everyone and solicits input; strike a balance between ongoing work (all of those agenda items continuing from the last meeting) and new ideas.
- Just as within the actual event, during planning meetings chapter leaders should greet each person who is there and be diligent when making connections and doing introductions when an individual unknown to the group is there.

V. National Lawyer Writing Competition

ACS currently sponsors The Richard D. Cudahy Writing Competition on Regulatory and Administrative Law annually. Practicing lawyers, policymakers, academics, and law students are all welcome to take part. We encourage participants to view this topic broadly and accept submissions on a variety of substantive areas. A winner will be selected in both the lawyer and student categories to receive a cash prize of \$1,500. The winning papers will receive special recognition at the ACS National Convention, on the ACS website, and potentially through other means agreed upon by the authors and ACS.

For more details about the competition, click [here](#).

VI. ACS National Convention

The ACS National Convention is held in Washington, D.C. every June. It's an important conference that draws over 1,000 progressive law students, lawyers, judges, and policymakers from all over the country, and includes speakers and panelists who are experts in their fields. Recent National Conventions have included U.S. Supreme Court Justices, State Attorneys General, members of the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate, social justice advocates, and other members of the bar who delivered powerful reflections focused on their professional experiences as well as their inspiring personal journeys that encouraged them to become lawyers.

Workshops, plenary sessions and training seminars, focused on numerous legal contemporary topics such as the use of social media, voting rights, and immigration, are discussed and debated. Lawyer Chapter members have shared with us that the ACS National Convention reminds our members why they decided to pursue their legal studies – in furtherance of pursuing justice and equality for all individuals through law and policy.

In many ways, this annual event is a wonderful reunion of ACS chapter members – both students and lawyers – from all over the country. In this manner, the ACS National Convention is a great networking conference for everyone, where Lawyer Chapter members can meet other practitioners in their field and also have the opportunity to mentor students through informal conversation and engagement in Washington, D.C.

Lawyer Chapters are recognized at the annual convention with awards recognizing outstanding programming, membership recruitment, and overall excellence.

We hope you'll join us for the 2020 ACS National Convention, June 11-13, in Washington, D.C.

Information concerning travel and hotel scholarships for law students and for lawyers practicing in the public interest sector, as well as information on how to submit program ideas, is communicated to all ACS members each year through the weekly bulletin.

VII. ACS National Lawyer Convening

The National Lawyer Convening is held every other year. In 2019, progressive lawyers and advocates from around the country gathered in Atlanta in October for that year's Convening. The program centered around the belief that the law can and should be a force to improve the lives of all people and empowered ACS leaders to help lead the charge. Attendees were given tangible ways to further this goal as progressive attorneys and advocates, having the opportunity to hone their leadership styles, make genuine connections with other legal professionals, share their stories about why progressive advocacy matters to them, and learn how to become a judge.

Speakers discussed the important and vital role community organizing, academic scholarship, creative litigation strategy, and legislative advocacy play in advancing issues like voting rights, reproductive freedom, immigration and asylum, right to counsel, and protecting the rule of law.

For future Convenings, information concerning travel and hotel scholarships for lawyers practicing in the public interest sector, as well as information on how to submit program ideas, is communicated to all ACS members each year through the weekly bulletin and messages to the Lawyer Chapter leader email list.

VIII. Communication with the ACS National Office

An open line of communication between your chapter and the national office is very important. We regularly send emails and conduct at least biannual conference calls with our Lawyer Chapters to update them on the activities of the national organization and other chapters, to make suggestions for programs and connect them with speakers in their areas, to disseminate information from other organizations that might be of interest to our members, and to ask them for help when needed. Toward this end, we ask that you provide us with the names, email addresses, employers and phone numbers of your entire board, and that you update us as soon as this information changes.

Remember, there should be one chair or other representative designated as the national contact, who regularly checks their email, and who will take responsibility for forwarding communications to all of the members of your board.

You should update your chapter's contact information by contacting the ACS National Lawyer Chapter Team at LCEmails@acslaw.org.

IX. Resources to Manage your Lawyer Chapter

- a. The Lawyer Chapter resource page can be found [here](#). It includes links to many of the documents referenced in this document, including the event check list, modelcalendar, reimbursement form, and more.
- b. Use [Google Groups](#) to support discussion groups.
- c. Use [Drop Box](#) to store and share files and folders with others online.
- d. Host board or steering committee conference calls using [Free ConferenceCall](#).
- e. Use Facebook to advertise events and communicate with your chapter members. And don't forget to like and follow the [ACS National Facebook page](#).
- f. Use Twitter to advertise events and communicate with your chapter members. And of course, follow the [ACS National](#) and [ACS Student Chapters](#) accounts.
- g. Join us on [LinkedIn](#).

Remember, the ACS National Office is here to help in any way we can. For further information, visit our website at www.acslaw.org, email LCEmails@acslaw.org, call our office at (202) 393-6181 or contact us by mail:

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