

President's Report to the APSA Membership
Susan Stokes
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It has been a great honor and pleasure to serve as your president in 2025-2026. This has been an active time for APSA, when the organization has had to navigate a challenging external environment as well as taking on major internal tasks. I write to report on some of the activities that I have been engaged in during this period.

Presidential Task Force

I have worked closely with the members of the presidential task force on the topic of The University in an Era of Democratic Backsliding. The task force has posed a series of key questions: What roles do universities play in democratic systems? Has the pace of threats to academic freedom around the world increased in recent years? What explains recent governments threats to academic freedom, in the U.S. and internationally? What measures, factors, and strategies have proved effective in defending academic freedom and the institutional integrity of institutions of higher education?

Our members are drawn from US and international institutions, and have worked hard to gather detailed information about the course of government-higher education relations in recent years. I am grateful to them as well as to APSA Senior Director Michelle Allendoerfer for her able help in this process. We plan to circulate a full draft of our report in the fall, gather input as widely as possible, and to issue a final report by the end of 2026.

Attendance at Regional and International Conferences

It has been my great pleasure to participate in a number of regional conferences. These include the Northeastern Political Science Association (Philadelphia), the Western Political Science Association (San Diego), the Midwestern Political Science Association (Chicago), as well as the National Conference of Black Political Scientists (College Park). In addition, I represented APSA at a number of international conference, including the Mexican Association of Political Science (AMECIP, Mexico City), the Brazilian Association of Political Science (Belém), and the Spanish Association of Political Science and Public Administration (Granada). The international visits have been particularly helpful as occasions to explore deeper connections between APSA and these important international collegial associations.

Visiting APSA Headquarters

In December, 2025, I had the opportunity to make a second visit to the APSA headquarters in Washington, D.C., this time jointly with President-Elect Beth Simmons. APSA's Executive Director, Kim Mealy, and senior staff did a wonderful job introducing us to the full staff, installations, and activities of APSA. For the second year in a row, I found this visit to be inspirational, revealing the enormous talent and commitment of a

staff whose activities I had scarcely been aware of earlier. I am deeply grateful to the APSA staff for organizing this visit, and for their excellent ongoing work for the Association.

Work with APSA Staff

In “normal” times, the work of APSA is wide-ranging and intense, including planning and carrying out the Annual Meetings and Teaching and Learning Conference, overseeing important professional publications, sponsoring programs such as Ralph Bunche Summer Institute and the Congressional Fellowship Program, among many others.

But these are far from normal times, and they have required APSA to take up new activities and intensify more familiar ones. APSA, and our membership, are deeply affected by changes in federal funding for research, heightened government involvement in our universities and research activities, and myriad other changes. During my presidency, the Association’s senior leadership and staff has risen to these challenges admirably. They have reinforced lobbying efforts on The Hill, crafted responses to proposed changes in federal support for political science research, and coordinated with sister organizations. Immediate past president Taeku Lee, President-Elect Beth Simmons, and I have taken part, as appropriate, in these efforts, as have several other past presidents of APSA. These challenges will undoubtedly continue to shape the work of the APSA staff and leadership in the coming years. They will need all of our support in doing so.

Work with the Executive Committee and Council

APSA’s Executive Committee and Council members continue to contribute their time and talents to the important ongoing work of the Association and the discipline. Key activities during my presidency have included negotiating a publications contract, under the able guidance of Senior Director of Publications, Jon Gurstelle. Aided by Executive Director Kim Mealy, the Executive Committee and Council are also crafting a new triennial Strategic Plan for APSA. Many other initiatives and policy questions have come before the Council. I am deeply grateful to them for their hard work and commitment.