

## What is A.L.E.C.? An Overview for LWVMC

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Our primary goal has been to learn about this powerful and influential political organization in the interest of openness, citizen involvement, and fairness in government.

1. **Mission and History** –Established in 1973, the American Legislative Exchange Council works to advance limited government, free markets, federalism, and individual liberty at the state level through a public-private partnership of state legislators and private sector members. It shifted focus in the 1980s toward influencing state legislatures. It is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and describes itself as “nonpartisan” even though Republican legislators outnumber Democratic legislators by a huge majority.
2. **Membership** –Corporations pay dues (\$7,000-\$25,000) and make donations; corporations provide grants to support specific projects. Legislators pay \$50 dues with no task force fees and get “scholarships” to cover expenses, including attendance at annual ALEC convention for members and families. Its National Board chairs (5) and at-large members (18) are state legislators; ALEC Scholars (honorary) do research in support of ALEC goals. Under public pressure, many corporations have recently left ALEC. (NOTE: Contrast with nonprofit National State Conference of Legislatures [NCSL] which has no corporate members and equivalent legislative members from both major political parties.)
3. **Task Forces** –Corporations pay to join and vote (\$2,500-\$10,000 per task force). Legislators attend free and work with corporate members to develop model policies to use across the country. Subjects of model bills include worker/consumer rights, tort reform, privatizing education, health/pharma/welfare, voting, environment/energy/agriculture, tax/budget. There are nine task forces which serve as clearinghouses on free market policies for the states, commission research, publish papers, convene workshops, and issue alerts.
4. **Funding and Spending** –Over 98% of income is from corporations (\$25,000 dues, fees for voting membership on task forces), corporate foundations, and trade groups. Less than 2% from legislator dues. Spending goes toward the annual convention, task forces, recruitment/retention, awards, and video production.
5. **ALEC Affiliates and related Foundations** –Charles G. Koch Foundation, Scaife Foundation, Coors’ Castle Rock Foundation, Heritage Foundation, Cato Institute, Heartland Institute, American Enterprise Institute; Focus on the Family; Freedom Works, Evergreen Freedom Foundation (in Olympia).
6. **ALEC in Washington State** –See [www.alec.org](http://www.alec.org) for current list of state legislator-members (Sen. Jan Angel is current state chair). Recent litigation efforts focused on Sequim, Shelton, and Chelan to promote legislation to influence city-union relations.

Subsequent LWVMC programs in 2015-2016 will provide information on several major areas of ALEC activity.

Sources:

A.L.E.C.--[www.alec.org](http://www.alec.org)

Center for Media and Democracy (nonprofit watchdog)-- [www.prwatch.org](http://www.prwatch.org) and [www.alecexposed.org](http://www.alecexposed.org)