

My Time at the State Capitol with Lift Louisiana

|
Annika Vanderspek newcomb@tulane.edu

[View PDF](#)



For my third semester interning with Lift Louisiana, I had the incredible opportunity to work with a dedicated team of advocates committed to advancing reproductive justice in Louisiana. This spring, I worked closely with Lift's executive director and co-founder, Michelle Erenberg, focusing on the 2023 Louisiana legislative session.

Each week, I prepared agendas and took notes during the Louisiana Coalition for Reproductive Freedom's legislative strategy calls. This involved conducting policy research, tracking bills, and promoting community partners' advocacy events. This was an eye-opening experience, as I gained a deeper understanding of the legislative process and the complex legal and political factors that shape reproductive healthcare and LGBTQ+ rights policy in Louisiana.

One of the key aspects of my internship with Lift Louisiana was organizing and attending the weekly Women on Wednesdays events, put on by Lift Louisiana and 10,000 Women. Women on Wednesdays aims to establish a continuous advocacy presence at the Louisiana State Capitol in Baton Rouge during the Legislative Session. These events offer a platform for advocates to stay informed about proposed legislation, comprehend its possible effects, and explore avenues to affect the legislative process. As an intern, I organized logistics, created materials to promote these events, and ensured each event went smoothly in Baton Rouge. Throughout the session, I attended committee hearings and press conferences, met with legislators and their staff to discuss key issues related to reproductive rights and health, and fostered community with state leaders and activists.

Spending each Wednesday at the Capitol advocating for reproductive justice and trans rights was often challenging. It can be disheartening to witness politicians prioritize their personal beliefs over the needs of their constituents, particularly after hours of powerful testimony. However, despite these challenges, the community of advocates that I was surrounded by gave me hope.

Working alongside passionate and dedicated individuals who were committed to the fight for reproductive rights and health was an incredibly inspiring experience. I was constantly energized by the resilience and determination of the advocates I shared space with, who showed up day after day to make their voices heard and push for change.

One of the most impactful aspects of my internship with Lift Louisiana was seeing the power of community mobilization. I witnessed firsthand the power of solidarity and collective action through events like Women on Wednesdays. While fighting for reproductive justice and trans rights is challenging, the community I was surrounded by during my internship with Lift Louisiana gave me hope and inspired me to continue this important work.

Overall, my internship with Lift Louisiana was an incredibly rewarding experience. I learned valuable skills, gained insight into the world of activism and advocacy, and had the opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to the fight for reproductive rights and health. I am grateful to the Lift Louisiana team for their guidance and support throughout my internship, and I look forward to continuing to engage with this important work in the years to come.