



AAUW Public Policy Program

AAUW's Public Policy Program, adopted every two years by every-member vote, establishes the federal action priorities on which AAUW members across the country focus their advocacy efforts and guides the work of the national staff. The adoption of the Public Policy Program is the culmination of a process involving many AAUW members. Leaders regularly solicit feedback, and members complete surveys online and through an every-member publication. Staff also recommends likely congressional action.

In the fall of even-numbered years, the AAUW Public Policy Committee uses this information to develop a proposed Public Policy Program, based on viability, critical need, strong member support, and potential for distinctive contribution. Once the draft is developed, it is posted online for a period of comments and additional proposed revisions. The APPC then finalizes the proposed Public Policy Program, and the AAUW Board of Directors reviews, amends, and approves it before it goes to the membership for a vote in the spring of odd-numbered years. The strength of the AAUW Public Policy Program is that it originates and ends with the membership.

Many of the changes to the program represent recommendations from state public policy chairs. Other changes are proposed to make the program read more smoothly or are strictly grammatical. What follows is a brief rationale for the few changes proposed in the 2011-13 program. Language for some positions has been updated.

In this biennial proposed program, no positions are proposed to be removed. The proposed changes to the preamble would bring it in line with AAUW's current mission statement and correctly identify the length of AAUW's legacy.

In the Public Policy Principles for Action, deleting "and harassment free" and adding "free of harassment and bullying" would expand the phrase to include "bullying," a term commonly used both in education and policy and in popular discussions on the topic. Moving the phrase "reduction of poverty" would improve the flow of the sentence. The addition of the phrase "in appointed and elected office" is in response to input from state public policy chairs and would clarify that AAUW actively supports women achieving public office. The phrase "against human trafficking and that" would explicitly add a position against human trafficking; this change originated from state public policy chairs and strong member interest and advocacy.

In the Biennial Action Priorities the addition of the phrase "and to charter schools that do not adhere to the same civil rights and accountability standards as other public schools" would add a clear position statement regarding charter schools. This phrase was added based on input from state public policy chairs, who have seen the rise of such schools in their communities. This language does not change AAUW's longstanding position on charter schools but, rather, makes that position explicit in the priorities. The addition of the phrase "a high standard of" would strengthen this position

by clarifying that AAUW not only advocates for work-life balance policies but in fact strives to enact the best and most effective of such policies. Replacing “vocational” with “career and technical” updates the term in the Public Policy Program to be in line with the term of art currently used in schools and education policy.

AAUW Public Policy Committee members are Nancy Mion (NY), chair; Sharon Clagett (WV); Anthony Hill (DC); Dixie F. Swenson (WA); Carolyn H. Garfein (GA), AAUW president, ex officio; Linda D. Hallman, AAUW executive director, ex officio; Kathy Anthon (TX), AAUW board liaison, ex officio; Kathy Kelm (MD), AAUW Action Fund Capitol Hill Lobby Corps chair, ex officio.

Proposed additions to the 2011–13 AAUW Public Policy Program are **boldfaced and underscored**; proposed deletions are ~~boldfaced and struck out~~. Items that have been moved to another section of the Public Policy Program are **boldfaced, underscored, and italicized** in their proposed new location and ~~boldfaced, italicized and struck out~~ in their proposed former location.

Proposed 2011–13 AAUW Public Policy Program

The Public Policy Program underscores AAUW’s mission of advancing equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, **philanthropy**, and research and speaks to women’s needs, aspirations, and concerns across the life span. The work of AAUW builds upon more than ~~125~~ **130** years of responsible public participation, and the following principles provide a basis for AAUW members’ actions at the local, state, national, and international levels. Implicit in each of our principles is support for government agencies administering programs, including adequate appropriations, effective and accountable administration, and provision for citizen participation. We advocate public discussion to ensure enlightened decisions on these principles. We work to increase the number of underrepresented populations, including women, in policy- and other decision-making positions. AAUW is committed to working in partnership with diverse allies and coalitions to break through educational and economic barriers for women and girls. [Editorial change: The revised wording in this paragraph reflects AAUW’s current mission statement and updates the length of AAUW’s legacy.]

Public Policy Principles for Action

Basic to all of AAUW’s public policy efforts is the understanding that true equity requires a balance between the rights of the individual and the needs of the community. AAUW opposes all forms of discrimination and supports constitutional protection for the civil rights of all individuals.

AAUW believes that quality public education is the foundation of a democratic society. We advocate equitable ~~and harassment-free~~ climates **free of harassment and bullying**, academic freedom, civic education, protection from censorship, bias-free education, and responsible funding for all levels of education, including early childhood education. We advocate increased access to higher education, especially for women in poverty. We promote equitable efforts to close the persistent achievement gap that disproportionately affects low-income children and students from minority communities. [Proposal 1: This change would expand the phrase to include bullying, a term commonly used both in education and policy and in popular discussions on the topic.]

AAUW promotes the economic, social, and physical well-being of all persons. Essential to that well-being are an economy that provides equitable employment opportunities, **reduction of poverty**, a livable wage, ~~reduction of poverty~~ quality affordable dependent care, paid family and medical leave, decent and affordable housing, quality affordable health care, and a clean and healthful environment. We support a Social Security system that provides inflation-protected, guaranteed lifetime benefits with a progressive benefit formula, spousal and widow benefits, and disability and survivor benefits. [Editorial change: Moving the phrase “reduction of poverty” improves the flow of the sentence.]

AAUW believes in the right to privacy, freedom from violence, and choice in the determination of one’s reproductive life. We firmly believe in the separation of church and state. We support a fair, balanced, and independent judiciary. We support public budgets that balance individual rights and responsibility to the community.

AAUW supports affirmative action to improve racial, ethnic, and gender diversity and affirms our commitment to passage and ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. We support meaningful campaign finance reform and voter education efforts that will promote equitable political participation and representation **in appointed and elected office**. AAUW values and is committed to the arts and humanities, which develop and enhance our pluralistic cultural heritage. [Proposal 2: Adding the phrase “in appointed and elected office,” a suggestion from AAUW state public policy

chairs, would clarify that AAUW actively supports women achieving public office.]

AAUW believes that global interdependence requires national and international policies **that against human trafficking and that** promote peace, justice, human rights, sustainable development, and mutual security for all people. We support a strengthened United Nations and its affiliated agencies. We advocate implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action from the 4th World Conference on Women and subsequent declarations. We affirm our commitment to the U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). We support international family planning programs that are consistent with AAUW policy. [Proposal 3: Adding the phrase “against human trafficking and that” would explicitly add a position against human trafficking; this proposal originated from state public policy chairs and strong member interest and advocacy.]

Biennial Action Priorities

Biennial priorities for federal action are chosen according to the criteria of viability, critical need, strong member support, and potential for distinctive AAUW contribution or leadership.

To support a strong system of public education that promotes gender fairness, equity, and diversity, AAUW advocates

- Adequate and equitable funding for quality public education for all students
- Opposition to the use of public funds for nonpublic elementary and secondary education **and to charter schools that do not adhere to the same civil rights and accountability standards as required of other public schools** [Proposal 4: Adding this phrase would provide a clear position statement on charter schools. The addition was suggested by AAUW state public policy chairs, who have seen the rise of such schools in their communities. This language does not change AAUW’s longstanding position on charter schools but, rather, makes that position explicit in the priorities.]
- Protection of programs that meet the needs of girls and women in elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education, including vigorous enforcement of Title IX and all other civil rights laws pertaining to education
- Increased support for and access to higher education for women and disadvantaged populations

- Increased support for programs that break through barriers for women and girls in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields

To achieve economic self-sufficiency for all women, AAUW advocates

- Pay equity and fairness in compensation
- Equitable access and advancement in employment, including vigorous enforcement of employment anti-discrimination statutes
- Greater availability of and access to **a high standard of** benefits and policies that promote work-life balance [Proposal 5: Adding the phrase “a high standard of” would strengthen this position by clarifying that AAUW not only advocates for work-life balance policies but, in fact, strives to enact the best and most effective of such policies.]
- Programs that provide women with education, training, and support for success in the workforce, including non-traditional occupations and women’s entrepreneurship
- Strengthening programs, including welfare and **vocational career and technical** education, to improve postsecondary education access, career development, and earning potential [Proposal 6: Replacing “vocational” with “career and technical” updates this language to match the term of art currently used in schools and education policy.]
- Strengthening retirement benefits and programs, including pension improvements and protecting Social Security from privatization

To guarantee equality, individual rights, and social justice for a diverse society, AAUW advocates

- Vigorous protection of and full access to civil and constitutional rights
- Choice in the determination of one’s reproductive life
- Freedom from violence and fear of violence in homes, schools, workplaces, and communities
- Increased access to quality, affordable health care and family planning services, including expansion of patients’ rights
- Support for U.N. programs that address human rights and women’s and girls’ concerns
- Freedom in the definition of family and a guarantee of civil rights in all family structures