

AAUW Proposed Public Policy Program

AAUW's Public Policy Program, adopted every two years by delegates at the national convention, 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, the AAUW Board of Directors reviews, amends, and approves it and publishes it for AAUW members' consideration. By the time the public policy program is considered at convention, delegates have had time to discuss it informally with local members, ask questions, participate in briefings at the convention, and understand the program's significance to AAUW's work in the public policy arena. Delegates then debate, amend, and adopt the program on the convention floor. The strength of the AAUW Public Policy Program is that it originates and ends with the membership.

Many of the changes represent recommendations from state public policy chairs. Other changes are proposed to make the program read more smoothly. After years of amending and rearranging, the program's organizational framework had blurred, jumping from thought to thought without a coherent structure. The Public Policy Principles for Action have been reordered to reflect the order in the Biennial Action Priorities. Some new language has been added to reflect the value promise ("By joining AAUW, you belong to a community that breaks through educational and economic barriers so that all women have a fair chance."), AAUW's clear leadership and interest in promoting early childhood education, and a policy objective on closing the educational achievement gap in direct response to AAUW's most recent research, *Where the Girls Are*. Language for some positions was updated. No positions are proposed to be removed.

Association Public Policy Committee members are Connie Hildebrand (ND), Chair; Donna Clontz (NV); Betsy Forkas (NY); Julie Harrison Kleszczewski (NY); Charmen Goehring-Fox (ME); Nancy Mion (NY); Lisa Schaefer (VA); Dixie Swenson (WA); Penny Wakefield (VA); Marcia Capriotti (GA), Program Vice President, ex officio; Ruth Z. Sweetser (IL), AAUW President, ex officio; Kathy Kelm (MD), AAUW Capitol Hill Lobby Corps Co-Chair, ex officio; Sandra Sieber (VA), AAUW Capitol Hill Lobby Corps Co-Chair, ex officio; Linda Hallman, CAE, AAUW Executive Director, ex officio.

Proposed additions to the 2009-2011 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.

To see "clean" versions of the current public policy program and the proposed public policy program for comparison purposes go to www.aauw.org/advocacy/issue_advocacy/principles_priorities.cfm

AAUW Public Policy Program, 2009–2011

The public policy program underscores AAUW's mission of advancing equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, and research, and speaks to women's needs, aspirations, and concerns across the life span. The work of AAUW builds upon **over a century more than 125 years** of responsible public participation, **and the following principles provide a basis for AAUW members' actions** at the local, state, national, and international levels. ~~*AAUW is committed to working in partnership with diverse allies. The following principles provide a basis for AAUW members' actions at*~~

Breaking through Barriers

for Women and Girls

the local, state, federal, 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.**

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. ~~**We firmly believe in the separation of church and state. AAUW opposes all forms of discrimination, and AAUW supports constitutional protection for the civil rights of all individuals, including the right to privacy. We believe in choice in the determination of one's reproductive life.**~~

~~**We support a fair, balanced, and independent judiciary. We oppose all forms of discrimination. We support affirmative action to improve racial, ethnic, and gender diversity. We affirm our commitment to passage and ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment.**~~

AAUW believes that quality public education is the foundation of a democratic society. We advocate, **equitable and harassment-free climates equity**, 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.**

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, a livable wage, reduction of poverty, quality affordable dependent care, paid family and medical leave, decent and affordable housing, ~~**and quality affordable health care; freedom from violence;**~~ 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. ~~**We support public budgets that balance individual rights and responsibility to community. We support meaningful campaign finance reform that will promote equitable participation and representation.**~~

~~**AAUW values and is committed to the arts and humanities, which develop and enhance our pluralistic cultural heritage.**~~

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. AAUW values and is committed to the arts and humanities, which develop and enhance our pluralistic cultural heritage.

AAUW believes that global interdependence requires national and international policies that promote peace, justice, human rights, sustainable development, and mutual security for all people. ~~We advocate public discussion to ensure enlightened decisions on these issues.~~ 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.

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
- ~~Vigorous enforcement of Title IX and all other civil rights laws pertaining to education~~
- Protection of programs that meet the needs of girls in elementary and secondary 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 other 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
- ~~Vigorous enforcement of employment antidiscrimination statutes~~
- Greater availability of and access to benefits and policies that ~~create a family-friendly workplace environment~~ promote work-life balance.
- Programs that provide women with education, training, and support for success in the workforce, including nontraditional occupations and women's entrepreneurship
- Strengthening programs, including welfare and vocational education, to improve postsecondary education access, career development, and earning potential
- Strengthening retirement benefits and programs, including pension improvements and protecting Protection of the social insurance nature of 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, and expansion of patients' rights

- Support for U.N. programs that address human rights and women’s and girls’ concerns

Explanatory Notes to Proposed Public Policy Program

1. *Preamble.* Two sentences are combined allowing one clear paragraph. A phrase is moved here from the international paragraph. In the preamble, it functions as an underpinning for the entire document, rather than a principle for action in only international issues. A sentence is moved from the end of the first paragraph to the end of the combined two paragraphs and new verbiage is added. It did not fit as well in the introductory paragraph, but as modified makes a strong closing for the newly combined paragraph. The new language reflects the value proposition as well as SPPC feedback for more explicit references to coalition work.
2. *Public Policy Principles for Action first paragraph.* For clarity and flow, the sentence on church and state was moved to the second paragraph. The specific reference to the right to privacy was moved to the fourth paragraph. This first paragraph now works well as overarching principles.
3. *Public Policy Principles for Action second paragraph.* The old second paragraph was moved to become the new fourth paragraph. This way, the first three paragraphs reflect the same order as the three sections in the biennial action priorities. The more overarching sentiment on discrimination was moved to the first paragraph. The new second paragraph now represents more specific education ideas. The statement supporting the ERA was moved to the new fourth paragraph. The addition of the phrase on harassment-free climates reflects AAUW’s clear leadership in improving the campus climate as well as comments from SPPCs. The added statement on early childhood education was based on input from several SPPCs. The added language at the end of the paragraph was added in direct response to AAUW’s most recent research, *Where the Girls Are*.
4. *Public Policy Principles for Action third paragraph.* The two sentences concerning public budgets and campaign finance reform have been moved to the new fourth paragraph where they seem to fit more cogently. This paragraph now reflects the economic self-sufficiency section of the biennial action priorities.
5. *Public Policy Principles for Action fourth paragraph.* This fourth paragraph represents more specific civil rights ideas. It is the original second paragraph moved to this position with additions. The sentence on campaign finance reform was moved from the original fourth paragraph, and remains the same except for the addition of the phrase “voter education efforts” and the word “political” used later in the sentence. AAUW’s commitment to voter education seemed appropriate to better enunciate, and the word “political” is added for clarity. The sentence on the arts and humanities was joined with this paragraph, rather than having its own paragraph. It fits in this fourth paragraph well, and its position here amplifies the entire paragraph’s message.

6. *Biennial Action Priorities first section.* Two bullets were merged based on a suggestion from an SPPC. Support for STEM was added based on a suggestion from an SPPC for stronger enunciation of STEM priority
7. *Biennial Action Priorities second section.* Two bullets were merged based on a suggestion from an SPPC. The replacement of “create a family-friendly workplace environment” with “promote work-life balance” reflects an updated term of art that is more inclusive for this range of policy issues. The phrase on entrepreneurship was added based on a suggestion from an SPPC. The replacement of “protection of the social insurance nature of” with “Strengthening retirement benefits and programs, including pension improvements and protecting” strengthens the bullet by referring to the range of retirement issues that affect women’s economic security in old age, rather than only Social Security. The addition of privatization reflects a suggestion from an SPPC to refer to privatization directly.
8. *Biennial Action Priorities second section.* The phrase “quality, affordable” was added for clarity.