

Due to clerical errors, the version of the proposed public policy program differs slightly from the version published in the Spring 2009 *AAUW Outlook*. This corrected version will be published in the 2009 AAUW National Convention book.

## **AAUW Public Policy Program**

The AAUW 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 a briefing 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 had become a hodgepodge that jumped 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 improving the campus climate, an interest in promoting early childhood education, and a policy objective on closing the socioeconomic 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); Charlene Goehring-Fox (ME); Nancy Mion (NY); Lisa Schaefer (VA); Dixie Swenson (WA); Penny Wakefield (VA); Marcia Capriotti (GA), AAUW Program Development Committee chair; 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; Linda Hallman, AAUW executive director, ex officio.*

To see the 2007–09 Public Policy Program for comparison purposes, go to [www.aauw.org/advocacy/issue\\_advocacy/principles\\_priorities.cfm](http://www.aauw.org/advocacy/issue_advocacy/principles_priorities.cfm).

## **Proposed 2009–11 AAUW Public Policy Program**

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 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. 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. 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, 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, 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.

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 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
- 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 antidiscrimination statutes
- Greater availability of and access to benefits and policies that 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 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