



## **AAUW Public Policy Priorities**

AAUW's Public Policy Priorities, adopted every two years by every-member vote, establish the federal action issues on which AAUW members across the country focus their advocacy efforts and guide the work of the national staff. States and branches should also use the Public Policy Priorities to inform their advocacy efforts on state and local issues.

The strength of the AAUW Public Policy Priorities is that they originate and end with the membership. In the fall of even-numbered years the AAUW Public Policy Committee (APPC) solicits feedback from members and staff to develop proposed Public Policy Priorities based on viability, critical need, strong member support, and potential for distinctive contribution. Once the draft is developed, it is posted online for a comment period and submission of additional proposed revisions. The APPC then finalizes the proposed Public Policy Priorities, and the AAUW Board of Directors reviews, amends as necessary, and approves them before they go to the membership for a vote in the spring of odd-numbered years.

This year's proposed edits make the following changes based on member leader feedback:

- Refinement and added specificity regarding AAUW's commitment to addressing systemic racism
- Refinement of our commitment to equitable access to higher education for all
- Emphasis on the importance of high-quality data collection

### **2021–23 AAUW Public Policy Priorities**

*Adopted May 2021*

The Public Policy Priorities underscore AAUW's mission to advance gender equity for women and girls through research, education, and advocacy. The work of AAUW builds upon responsible public participation, and the following priorities provide a basis for AAUW members' actions at the local, state, national, and international levels. Implicit in each 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 priorities. We work to increase the number of women, and the diversity of backgrounds they represent, including race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual identity, in policy- and other decision-making positions. Our positions are shaped by our commitment to being nonpartisan and fact-based, and to acting with integrity. We strive for our work to be inclusive and intersectional, collaborating with diverse allies and coalitions to achieve equity for all.

Basic to all 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 high-quality public education is the foundation of a democratic society and the key to improving economic prosperity and gender equality. We advocate equitable access to education and climates free of harassment, bullying, and sexual assault. We support academic freedom, civic education, protection from censorship, bias-free education, and responsible funding for all levels of education, including early childhood education and programs for students with disabilities. We advocate for increased and more equitable access to higher education, that is affordable and yields high quality credentials or degrees. We promote intentional, equity-focused efforts to close the persistent learning and opportunity gaps that disproportionately affect students from low-income and minority groups.

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 living wage; quality, affordable dependent care; paid family and medical leave; safe, livable, and affordable housing; quality, affordable, and accessible health care for all, including reproductive health care; and a clean, healthy, and sustainable 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 robust and strong Medicare and Medicaid systems and oppose any efforts to undermine them, including privatization and block grant proposals. AAUW recognizes that gun violence is a public health and safety crisis.

AAUW believes in the right to privacy and freedom from violence. 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. We see an urgent need for meaningful campaign finance reform, open and fair elections that are broadly accessible to all voters, and nonpartisan voter education efforts that will promote equitable political participation and representation in appointed and elected office.

AAUW believes in the need to end white supremacy and address structural and systemic racism. Efforts to improve racial, ethnic, and gender justice must be embedded into every initiative. This includes working to eradicate intersectional bias and creating a culture of involvement, respect, inclusion, and connection, where the richness of diverse ideas, backgrounds, and perspectives is fully appreciated, understood and utilized.

AAUW believes that global interdependence requires national and international policies against human trafficking and that promote peace, justice, human rights, sustainable development, and mutual security for all people. We support the civil and human rights of all immigrants, including a fair and just path to legal status. 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 active participation in the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women and our commitment to ratification of 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**

National priorities inform state and local action. Biennial priorities for national action are chosen according to the criteria of viability, critical need, strong member support, and potential for distinctive AAUW contribution or leadership. Additional policy priorities are also critical to ensure equity for all. No further order of importance for the additional priorities is implied.

#### **To support a strong system of public education that promotes gender fairness, equity, diversity and inclusivity, and to address the barriers and implicit biases that hinder the advancement of women and girls, AAUW advocates**

- Strengthening and vigorous enforcement of Title IX and all other civil rights laws pertaining to education
- Adequate and equitable funding for and access to quality public education, including early childhood 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
- Increased support for and protection of programs that meet the needs of girls and women in elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education, including strong promotion of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education and comprehensive sexual health education
- Increased support for and access to affordable higher education for women, including alleviating the debt burden that disproportionately impacts borrowers of color and exacerbates the racial wealth gap
- Support for practices that halt the flow of students from schools to prisons, including reforming school disciplinary practices that disproportionately punish girls and students of color

#### **To achieve economic security for all women, AAUW advocates**

- Pay equity and fairness in compensation and benefits
- Equitable access and advancement in employment, free from systemic barriers and biases, including vigorous enforcement of employment discrimination statutes
- Closing the gender and race gaps in leadership opportunities for women of all backgrounds
- Greater availability of and access to a high standard of benefits and policies that promote work-life balance, including quality and affordable dependent care and paid family, medical, and sick leave
- 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 career and technical education, to improve postsecondary education access, career development, and earning potential
- Strengthening retirement benefits and programs, including pension improvements and protecting Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid from privatization

- Access for all women to the full range of health care services to ensure economic security
- Increasing the number of quality jobs that pay a living wage

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

- Vigorous enforcement of and full access to civil and constitutional rights, including affirmative action and expanding voting rights
- Complete, accurate and timely collection of data, disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and gender identity to inform policy decisions and the apportionment of political representation
- Self-determination of one's reproductive health decisions
- Universal access to quality, affordable health care, including insurance, and comprehensive family planning services, including expansion of patients' rights
- Freedom from violence and fear of violence, including hate crimes, in homes, schools, workplaces, and communities
- Support for U.N. programs that address human rights and women's and girls' concerns
- Freedom in the definition of self and family, including protection from discrimination and a guarantee of civil rights for all family structures
- Passage and ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment

**Additional Policy Resources:**

• **AAUW Action Network and Two-Minute Activist Tool:** The cornerstone of AAUW's e-advocacy efforts, Action Network sends subscribers urgent email notices when their advocacy is needed most.

• **Two-Minute Activist** ([aauw.us/twominuteactivist](http://aauw.us/twominuteactivist)) online tool allows you to quickly contact your legislators and make your voice heard. Anyone with an email address can subscribe.

• **AAUW Washington Update:** This email bulletin offers an insider's view on the public policy process, the latest policy news, and updates from the Public Policy and Government Relations Department. Join the list ([aauw.us/washingtonupdate](http://aauw.us/washingtonupdate)) today.

• **Quick Facts:** AAUW compiles current information and advocacy resources on issues related to our Public Policy Priorities in order to provide resources that offer rigorous analysis and most effective avenues for action. For updated position papers and quick facts on AAUW's priority issues, visit the AAUW Issues webpage ([aauw.us/aauwissues](http://aauw.us/aauwissues)).

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