



Public Policy News

A monthly dispatch from the AAUW California Public Policy Team

LOBBY DAYS APRIL 2-3, 2024

Advocate for our key bills!

We encourage all members to participate! Be on the lookout for a registration form to arrive in your inbox mid-January. Please consider volunteering for the important role of team leader. The registration form will describe the key responsibilities. Also note that if you indicate willingness to meet with legislators outside of your own district, you may have the opportunity to team up with college student participants.

LEGISLATIVE AGENDA 2024

Coming soon! Send us Your Ideas!

Our committee will be evaluating new bills starting in January for our 2024 Legislative Agenda. If you hear of any interesting legislation that will be introduced and that you would like us to review, please let us know at publicpolicy@aauw-ca.org.

WHERE IS THAT?

Find All Things Public Policy

Key links to your public policy resources:

- [Google Workspace](#)
- [AAUW Policy Leaders Manual from National](#)
- [Branch liaisons](#)
- Contact us at publicpolicy@aauw-ca.org.
- **Tell us about your branch public policy events** so that we can highlight them on the AAUW California website. Please share information by filling out this [form](#).
- **Sign up for CA Legislative Action Alerts [HERE!](#)** Share the sign-up link with anyone you think may be interested. AAUW members and non-members are welcome. You can share this copy-and-paste shareable link: <https://forms.gle/zkxQM8gByqjGymTA>

NEXT MEETING FOR BRANCH PUBLIC POLICY CHAIRS

Wednesday 2/07 @ 2pm PT

Kathi Harper, chair of the School Board Project, will share an update about the project and what members can do now to help.

Click [HERE](#) for meeting information.

SAVE THE DATES!

Upcoming Bimonthly Virtual Meetings for Branch Public Policy Chairs

Wednesday 4/10* @ 2pm PT
Wednesday 6/05 @ 2pm PT

Amy and Missy will provide updates and branches will have the opportunity to share ideas.

Click [HERE](#) for meeting information.

*Note: April's meeting will be on the second Wednesday of the month, as Lobby Days is scheduled for the first week of April.

Is There a Hidden Agenda Behind the “Parents’ Rights” Movement?

By Kathi Harper, chair AAUW California Public Policy School Board Project Committee

We members of the AAUW California Public Policy School Board Project sub-committee frequently come across materials from groups advocating for book-banning, curriculum censorship, and policies which negatively impact the lives of LGBTQ+ students, in the name of “Parent’s Rights.” For example the House of Representatives recently passed H.R. 5, the “Parents Bill of Rights Act.” Eight governors have signed legislation with similar titles.

H.R. 5 establishes the rights of parents to, among other things: review curriculum; inspect the books and other reading materials in the school library; be advised of policies that permit transgender girls to compete on female athletic teams or use bathrooms or lockers designated for females; and provide consent before a school may use their child’s chosen name or pronouns on forms, or change the child’s sex-based accommodations. Many of the state laws noted above require the removal of “inappropriate” materials upon the objection of a single person.

AAUW California recognizes that not all our members will find these policies objectionable. And to be sure, most of our members would agree with this statement from PEN America, a human rights and free expression organization: “There is no question that parents deserve a say in shaping their children’s educations; that they have a moral and legal responsibility for their children, and the freedom to make fundamental decisions for their families.” (Suzanne Nossel, PEN America CEO, [Time Sept. 20, 2022.](#))

However, legitimate questions are raised when one parent’s “right” to control what their child reads and learns collides with another parent’s right to ensure their child has access to a broad and diverse range of educational materials. Or when a parent’s “right” to know if their child confides to a teacher regarding a sexual identity unknown to the parent collides with the student’s right to privacy. Or when one parent’s “right” to ensure her daughter doesn’t play on the same team as a transgender girl collides with that girl’s right to partake in all the same activities as other girls, or to feel safe in the campus environment.

AAUW California advocates for a diverse curriculum in our schools, as well as the protection of all forms of gender identity and expression. It is a cause of concern when the rallying cry of “parents’ rights” is, as stated by PEN America, “wielded to do far more than give parents their rightful voice; it is turning public schools into political battle grounds, fracturing communities, and diverting time and energy away from teaching and learning.” Additionally, according to the National Education Association (NEA), H.R. 5 “ignores the breadth of parental engagement” that already exists, “disregards educator experience and expertise” and “inserts the government into local decisions.”

PEN America worries that the current emphasis on working with schools for the betterment of the child has been replaced with a parental focus on wanting to impose their personal beliefs – moral, religious, and/or political – on the entire education system. As an organization founded on the principal of expanding educational opportunities we might all heed Suzanne Nossel’s final words in her Time article: “The phrase ‘parents’ rights’ may have a nice ring to it, but the agenda now afoot in its name should sound alarms for all those who care about the future of public education.”

Read more at: [Pen.org](#), [Nea.org](#).