



NOVEMBER 2025 | ISSUE 25

Public Policy News

A monthly dispatch from the AAUW California Public Policy Team

2025 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Some Big Wins & Tough Losses

October 13, 2025 was the final day for Governor Newsom to sign the bills on his desk. Of the fourteen bills on AAUW California's Legislative Agenda which made it to his desk, the Governor signed 11 and vetoed 3, including two of our A priority bills - SB 771, sponsored by AAUW California, and SB 418. While it is disappointing that our A level support bills did not do better, we are celebrating the 11 B and C level support bills that were signed, alongside the resounding failure of three of the bills that we made it a priority to oppose.

Thank you for responding to Action Alerts, signing Resistbot petitions, calling your representatives and the Governor, and for all of the other things you did to get the word out about these bills.

Please see pages 4-5 for a full article on the outcome of the 2025 Legislative Agenda, and pages 7-9 for a scorecard.

Upcoming Events

Mark Your Calendars!



AAUW California Webinar - Harnessing the Power of AI. **Nov 1, 2025 10:00-11:30am**. Register [HERE](#)

AAUW Silicon Valley Branch Program on Higher Education at Risk - And How You Can Help Protect It - featuring Meghan Kissell, AAUW Senior Director of Policy. **Dec 3, 2025 4:00-5:00pm**. Register [HERE](#)

AAUW California School Board Project Half Day Symposium - **Saturday Jan 31, 2026 9:00am-12:00 noon** via Zoom. **SAVE THE DATE** - registration link coming soon.

AAUW Silicon Valley Branch will host a virtual event on reproductive rights featuring [Leah Litman](#), host of the popular [Strict Scrutiny](#) podcast - **Thursday Jan 22, 2025 1:00-2:00pm**. **SAVE THE DATE** - registration link coming soon.

If you missed it...

AAUW California Public Policy Webinar - Project 2025 Impacts on AAUW Values - One Year Later: How to Stop Ongoing Implementation. See the recording and presentation [HERE](#)

BRANCH PUBLIC POLICY CHAIRS' MEETING

NEXT PEER GROUP MEETING

Friday Dec 5, 2025
at 1:30pm Pacific
ZOOM LINK [HERE](#)



Click [HERE](#) for meeting information.



Peer Group Meetings will be bi-monthly on Fridays at 1:30pm.

All are welcome!

2025-2026 Meetings:

Fri Dec 5 at 1:30pm
Fri Feb 6 at 1:30pm
Fri Apr 3 at 1:30pm
Fri Jun 5 at 1:30pm

SIGN UP FOR ACTION ALERTS [HERE.](#)

WHERE IS THAT?



Key links to your public policy resources:

- [Google Workspace](#)
- Contact us at publicpolicy@aauw-ca.org.
- Tell us about your branch public policy events by filling out this [form](#).

click here!

2025
[Bill Tracker](#)

Three Steps to Take Action in November

Focus: Protect Voting Rights



Taking action is as easy as 1-2-3! Each month we provide you with a short list of targeted action-items focused on a topic-area that we care about. This month our focus is on PROTECTING VOTING RIGHTS.

If you want more options for action, please visit the [AAUW California public policy website](#), stop by our peer group meetings, or visit the [Take Action!](#) spreadsheet (soon-to-be website for easier navigation).

Take Action: Protect Voting Rights

STEP 1: Self-Focused: Education

1



- Learn more about and follow the Supreme Court case *Louisiana v. Callais*. This case will decide on a Louisiana-based challenge to key aspects of Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act, which prevents racial discrimination in voting. Should it be overturned, the consequences will be profound for the entire nation. AAUW CEO Gloria Blackwell has weighed in on this case (see remarks at 1:28:24).
- Learn more about the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility ([SAVE](#)) Act. The United States House of Representatives has passed the SAVE Act (HR 22), which would require every eligible voter to provide documentary proof of citizenship to register to vote. While this sounds potentially harmless, such measures have been shown to lead to voter suppression and disproportionately impact women. AAUW formally opposes the SAVE Act.
- Learn more about how Voting Rights have recently been challenged in California, including through [AB 25 \(2025\)](#), which we actively opposed (see p.4).

STEP 2: Other-Focused: Education & Connection

2



- Tell at least TWO other people what you have learned about *Louisiana v. Callais*, the SAVE Act, and/or ongoing challenges to election integrity in California.
- Have you and your Californian family, friends, and neighbors all voted on Proposition 50? Election Day is November 4th--we're in the home stretch. No better way to celebrate our voting rights! Please click here to access the [AAUW CA Prop 50 GOTV Guide](#).

STEP 3: Politically-Focused

3



- Reach out to your legislators about the SAVE Act. Click [here](#) to access AAUW's Two-Minute Activist page, then click on "Tell the Senate: Oppose the SAVE Act".
- Reach out to your legislators to do something proactive to protect voting rights. Click [here](#) to access the Center for Common Ground web page to ask Congressional representatives and senators to champion passage of the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act (HR 14), supported by AAUW.

CLICK [HERE](#) TO ACCESS THE AAUW CA PUBLIC POLICY WEBSITE

Special Election Nov 4th

Get Out The Vote (GOTV)



Action
Creates
Change

Last Call! GOTV/Proposition 50

If you haven't yet done so, **please check out the Proposition 50 resources that we have developed.** You can find the resources [HERE](#) or on the AAUW California home page ([HERE](#)). You can also share the resources with more people by reposting AAUW California Public Policy's social media messages from Bluesky about important GOTV dates ([HERE](#)) and Prop 50 ([HERE](#)). You can repost through your personal Bluesky account or copy the post-links above to re-post on your personal accounts on other platforms (e.g. Facebook).

Updates from National

AAUW showing up!



At the Supreme Court: AAUW showed up. Our CEO, Gloria L. Blackwell, spoke at the rally on October 15, and our members were there on the steps. While some of the justices' questions were disheartening, it was powerful to see our community out in force. **Check out the pictures of our members in [THIS article](#).**



More layoffs? Maybe not. AAUW signed a joint statement with disability, civil-rights, and education partners opposing harmful layoffs that would have gutted the Office for Civil Rights (OCR), the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), and the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE). **On October 15, a judge temporarily blocked the administration from moving forward at most agencies, and extended this to an indefinite block [on October 28](#) . Read more [HERE](#).**



Opposing the Higher-Ed "Compact": The administration's "Compact for Academic Excellence" ties funding to rollbacks of DEI and academic freedom. **AAUW will issue our own statement**, and we've joined a coalition letter urging presidents and trustees to reject the "administration's invitation to violate the law, abdicate your duty to your students and campus community, and betray academic freedom." MIT and Brown University have both publicly rejected the Compact.



AAUW has submitted an organizational comment opposing the U.S. Department of Education's proposal to adopt the supplemental priority "Promoting Patriotic Education." Please see a background briefing on the Department's proposal from Democracy Forward [HERE](#). AAUW's comments are [HERE](#).

Five Star Program

Earn a Star for Public Policy & Advocacy

The AAUW Five-Star Program is designed to help branches align with AAUW's strategic priorities and advance our mission of achieving gender equity for women and girls. Learn more about the program and how to earn a star for Public Policy and Advocacy. See the [recording](#) and [presentation](#) from a recent Branch Development Peer Group meeting.

CLICK [HERE](#) TO ACCESS THE PROPOSITION 50 & GOTV GUIDE (2025)

2025 Legislative Session Ends with Some Big Wins and Tough Losses for AAUW California

By Amy Hom and Missy Maceyko, Co-chairs AAUW California Public Policy Committee

The 2025 legislative session has closed in California.

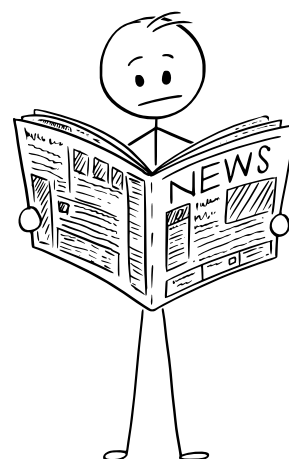
Kathy Van Osten, AAUW California's Legislative Advocate, summarized the session this way: "In 2025, 917 bills were sent to the Governor, of which he signed 794 bills and vetoed 123 bills. The 2025 Legislative Session was tumultuous as policymakers worked to address the impacts of ravaging urban wildfires in Los Angeles, to pass a State Budget that closed a \$12 billion deficit, and to address a multitude of impacts created by the violent upheaval of federal funding and policies that have or will decimate services for Californians, that threaten existing or future projects in the State, and that threaten our educational institutions."

With these issues in mind, in March AAUW California put together our 2025 Legislative Agenda, taking a support position on 26 bills, and for the first time in our recent history, taking an opposition position on 7 bills. With the blessing of the Public Policy Committee and the AAUW California Board, we were proud to advance this agenda, which confronted some of the most pressing issues that we face as a state, and a nation, around gender equity and social justice. We were also proud to take strong opposition positions this year, given the large number of bills introduced at the start of the session that were antithetical to AAUW California's values and Public Policy Priorities.

While our A-priority support bills did not fare well this session, we are happy to report that we had a great deal of success with the rest of our support-bills as well as with stopping the opposition bills from advancing.

First the bad news: Our A-priority support bills were vetoed or gutted.

- **SB 771 was vetoed.** This A-priority bill, authored by Senator Henry Stern and sponsored by AAUW California, would have held social media companies liable if their algorithms aid or abet individual users who are breaking the law and intimidating or threatening others in online spaces. The Governor vetoed the bill, indicating that current civil rights laws have not been tested in the courts with respect to algorithms' complicity in hate crimes, and that until existing law is deemed insufficient by the courts, SB 771 is premature.
- **SB 418 was vetoed.** This A-priority bill, authored by Senator Caroline Menjivar, would have prohibited a health service provider from denying coverage for services based upon race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex, including sexual preference or gender identity, intersex traits, and pregnancy. The Governor vetoed the bill, citing a concern that the bill's requirement to cover prescribed hormone therapy without utilization management (UM) is likely to drive up the cost of health care.
- **AB 1098 was gutted and amended.** This A-priority bill, authored by Assemblymember Mike Fong, would have prohibited a postsecondary educational institution from discriminating against a student based on their current, potential, or past pregnancy or pregnancy-related conditions. According to the author's office, the bill had run into significant opposition from the public universities, and they chose not to continue to move the bill this year. Instead, the bill language was gutted and replaced with language that establishes the Office of the Interagency Council on Education within the Governor's Operations Agency. The amended bill was signed into law.



2025 Legislative Session Ends with Some Big Wins and Tough Losses for AAUW California

By Amy Hom and Missy Maceyko, Co-chairs AAUW California Public Policy Committee



Now, the good news: Of our fourteen support bills that made it to the Governor's desk, eleven were signed into law. Below are some important wins:

- **AB 621 - signed into law!** This B-priority bill, authored by Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer-Kahan, heightens penalties for companies whose platforms distribute deepfake pornography.
- **SB 669 - signed into law!** This B-priority bill, authored by Senate President pro Tempore Mike McGuire, authorizes up to five rural hospitals throughout the state to partner with licensed birth centers to provide perinatal services in rural communities.
- **AB 260 - signed into law!** Authored by Assemblymember Cecilia Aguiar-Curry, this bill protects access to medication abortion.
- **SB 627- signed into law!** Authored by Senator Scott Wiener, this bill bans law enforcement officers from wearing facial coverings during their duties. **This is the first such law enacted in the nation!**

And of the seven bills that AAUW California opposed, four have become 2-year bills and three have died:

- **AB 579 is dead!** This A-priority bill, authored by Assemblymember Leticia Castillo, would have stated categorically that parents' refusal to acknowledge a child's gender identity can never be considered a form of abuse or neglect, and therefore cannot be considered in a custody dispute.
- **AB 25 is dead!** Authored by Assemblymember Carl DeMaio, this bill would have required an elections official to verify the citizenship of voters and authorized the official to require a person to provide documentation of citizenship for that purpose.
- **AB 1012 is dead!** Authored by Assemblymember Bill Essayli, this bill would have prohibited the provision of Medi-Cal to people without legal immigration status.



To see the full results of the 2025 Legislative Agenda, please go to the [Bill Tracking Report](#), and see page 7 of this issue of [Public Policy News](#) to review the Legislative Agenda Scorecard.

Supporting Public Education: Community-Based Coalitions

By Ogie Strogatz, Member AAUW California Public Policy School Board Project



It began with one quietly determined advocate on a mission. Laurinda Ochoa, a Danville-based grandmother and retired attorney, was alarmed by the 2021 launch of Moms for Liberty chapters across California. In 2022 she began monitoring San Ramon Valley Unified School District (SRVUSD) board meetings, where she observed a swelling stream of demands from Moms for Liberty and their allies favoring restrictive and/or anti-LGBTQ+ curricula. Laurinda's desire to organize with like-minded local public education champions led her to join the Danville-Alamo-Walnut Creek (DAW) branch, where in 2023 she secured a strong commitment for branch representation at monthly meetings of the SRVUSD Board. Laurinda noted the organizations represented by other community attendees at the school board meetings. She nurtured relationships between our DAW branch and other groups who share AAUW's dedication to outstanding public education.

And she pressed on. Hearing DAW members' concerns about the challenges confronting school boards throughout the area, recognizing the synergistic political impact of multiple organizations speaking with a unified voice, and the potential for grassroots public education advocates across school districts to learn from one another through shared successes and challenges, Laurinda scaled up. She contacted the leaders of local pro-public education organizations to solicit their interest in forming a grassroots coalition that would serve as an additional source of support for public education across Contra Costa and Alameda Counties. The response was widespread enthusiasm. After several leadership planning meetings, the Lift Up Public Schools coalition launched formally in April, 2024.

Lift Up Public Schools (LUPS) is an all-volunteer coalition of grassroots groups from Contra Costa and Alameda Counties advocating for excellent public education delivered in settings that are safe and welcoming to all. LUPS has about 250 members including leaders from AAUW branches; PTA; Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG); the League of Women Voters; teachers unions; county and local partisan organizations; and current and former school district faculty and staff. The coalition is not funded by any political organization or entity. LUPS does not raise funds or make donations. The coalition's mission is to advocate for high-quality public education that values diversity, equity, and inclusion. Its vision is a vibrant, democratic society of compassionate, well-informed, engaged community members.

LUPS initially focused on helping recruit, vet, and drive turnout to elect 2024 pro-public education school board candidates. The coalition supported 10 candidates running for seats in 8 Alameda County districts, 6 of whom won, and 6 candidates running for seats in 4 Contra Costa County districts, 4 of whom won. The coalition's support included social media promotion, assistance with the planning and conduct of candidate forums, and volunteering for candidate campaigns. In addition to electoral work, LUPS conducted community outreach to cultivate awareness, understanding, and action regarding the challenges facing public education; submitted public comments supporting diverse and inclusive ethnic studies curriculum; and endorsed a district parcel tax campaign. In the wake of the 2024 elections, the coalition has worked on capacity-building – evolving its organizational structure to stimulate the growth of LUPS local hubs in nearby school districts, expanding community outreach and education about the work of school boards, and developing as a trusted source of insight on the local impact of key public education-related issues at all levels of government.

As a LUPS organizer, I can attest to the value of our nascent coalition. We are growing compassionate grassroots power – holding a summit where presenters and the public exchange national, regional, and local perspectives on how best to respond to crucial challenges confronting public education; promoting outstanding school board candidates; publicizing local pro-public education initiatives; encouraging the development of local advocacy hubs; and leveraging the thousands of person-years of LUPS members' collective experience to help communities fulfill our highest aspirations for public education.

It can start with a single advocate – might be you!



This article is the third installment in a series focused on the AAUW California School Board Project. If you missed them, check out "Understand the Urgency of Branch Participation in the School Board Project" and "School Boards - The Overlooked Frontline of Democracy" in the September and October issues of Public Policy News.

CLICK [HERE](#) TO ACCESS A TEXT-BASED COPY OF THE NL ARTICLE

2025 AAUW California Priority Legislation Scorecard

7

Bills Died

11

Bills Signed into Law

3

Bills Vetoed

2

Bills were Gutted and Amended

10

Bills became 2-year bills

A-Level Support Bills

Our A-level support bills did not fare well this year.

AB 1098 was gutted and amended. Authored by Assemblymember Mike Fong, this bill would have prohibited a postsecondary educational institution from discriminating against a student based on their current, potential, or past pregnancy or pregnancy-related conditions. The bill ran into significant opposition from the public universities, and the author's office decided to gut the bill and replaced it with language that establishes the Office of the Interagency Council on Education within the Governor's Operations Agency. The amended bill was signed by the Governor.

SB 771 was vetoed. Authored by Senator Henry Stern and sponsored by AAUW California, this bill would have held social media companies liable if their algorithms aid or abet individual users who are breaking the law and intimidating or threatening others in online spaces. The Governor felt that current civil rights laws have not been tested in the courts with respect to algorithms' complicity in hate crimes, and that SB 771 was premature.

SB 418 was vetoed. Authored by Senator Caroline Menjivar, this bill would have prohibited a health service provider from denying coverage for services based upon race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex, including sexual preference or gender identity, intersex traits, and pregnancy. Governor cited concerns about the potential to drive up the cost of health care.

Opposition Bills

We opposed 7 bills this year. Three have died; the other four are now 2-year bills.

AB 579 is dead! This **A-priority bill**, selected for strong opposition, was authored by Assemblymember Leticia Castillo. The bill would have stated categorically that parents' refusal to acknowledge a child's gender identity can never be considered abuse, and therefore cannot be considered in a custody dispute.

AB 25 is dead! Authored by Assemblymember Carl DeMaio, this bill would have required election officials to verify voter citizenship.

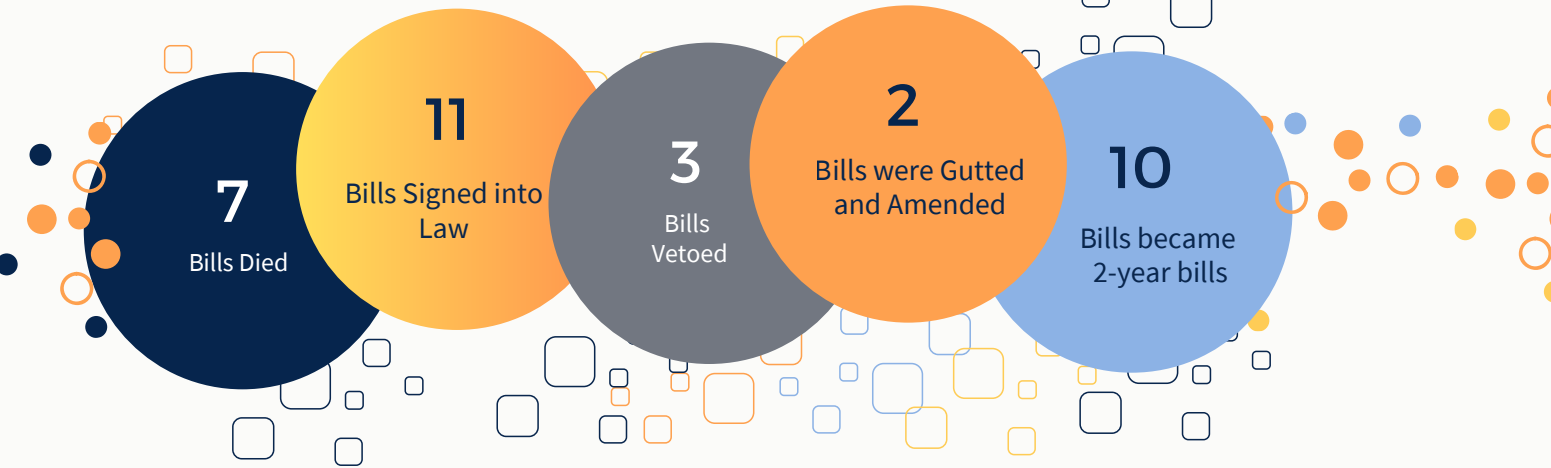
AB 1012 is dead! Authored by Assemblymember Bill Essayli, this bill would have prohibited the provision of Medi-Cal to people without legal immigration status.

B-Level Support Bills

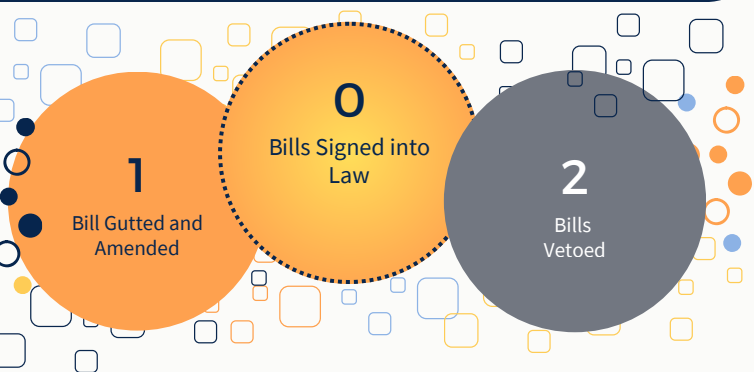
AB 621 - Signed into Law! Authored by Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer-Kahan, this bill prohibits a person from posting digitized sexually explicit material if the depicted individual is least 18 years of age and did not consent to the creation or posting of the material. If the depicted individual is under 18, consent is not a factor.

SB 669 - Signed into Law! Authored by Senate President pro Tempore Mike McGuire, this bill requires the Department of Health to establish a 10-year pilot program allowing up to five qualified critical access hospitals to operate standby perinatal units.

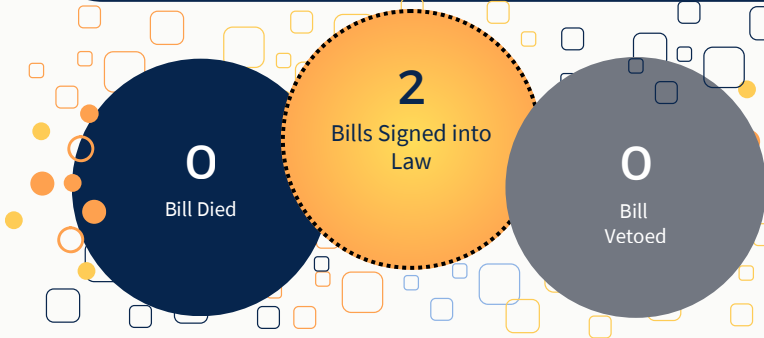
2025 AAUW California Priority Legislation Scorecard, by priority level



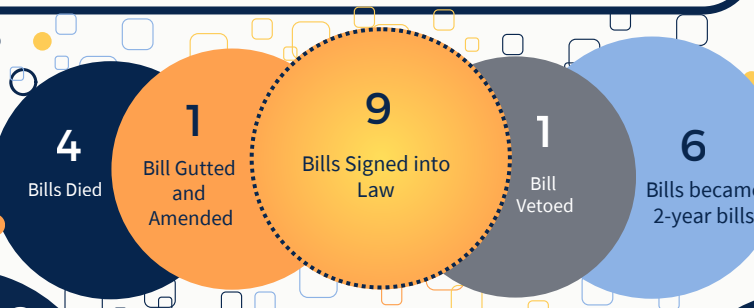
A-Level Support Bills



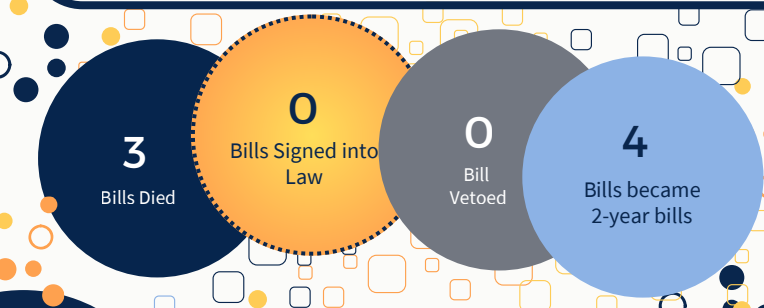
B-Level Support Bills



C-Level Support Bills



Opposition Bills



Economic Security for All Women

Equity in the workplace
Enforcement of workplace anti-discrimination statutes
Security in retirement
Job training for career development
Work-life balance

Equal Access to Quality Public Education for All Students

Title IX enforcement for anti-discrimination
Adequate and equitable funding for public education
Diverse and historically accurate curricula
Diverse staff
Civics instruction in all CA high schools
Equitable access to STEM programs
Civics instruction
Funding to support strong infrastructure
Civil rights and accountability standards

Social and Racial Justice for All Members of Society

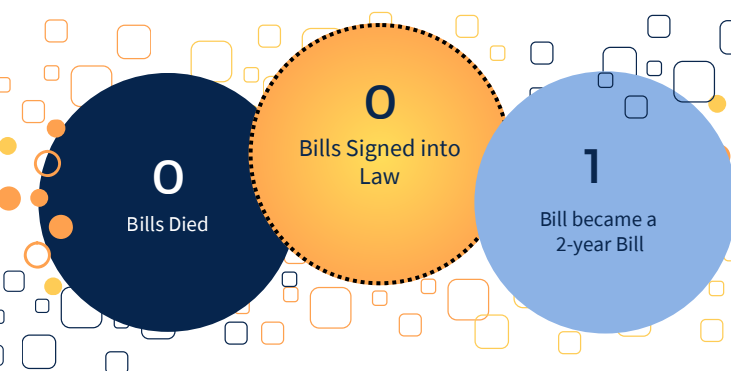
Self-determination in healthcare decisions
Equal access to affordable healthcare and housing
Equal access to gender affirming care
Freedom from violence
Civil and voting rights protections
Protections for historically marginalized groups
Efforts to resist anti-immigrant policies
United Nations human rights protections

Increased Representation of Women in Leadership Roles

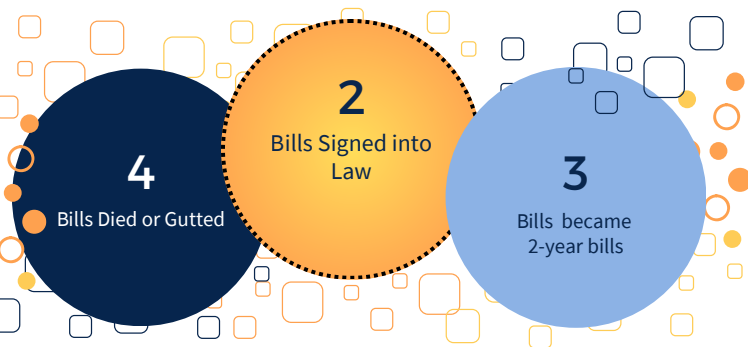
Proportional appointment to publicly held boards
Leadership skills training
Programs that promote participation in public service careers

2025 AAUW California Priority Legislation Scorecard, by pillar

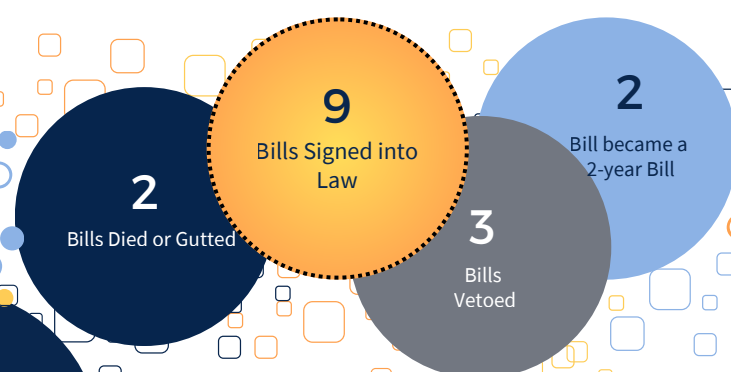
Economic Security for All Women - Support



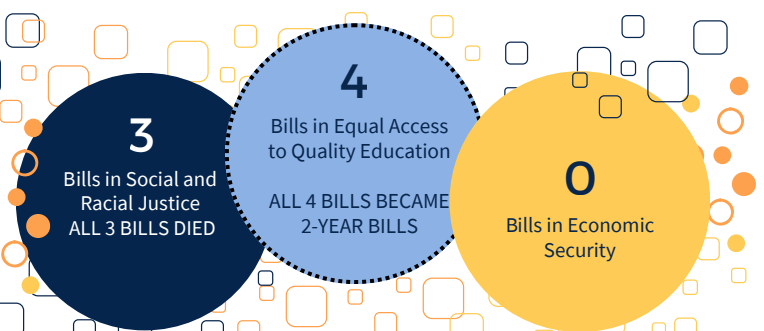
Equal Access to Quality Public Education - Support



Social and Racial Justice for All Society - Support



All Opposition Bills



GET TO KNOW YOUR PPP COMMITTEE MEMBERS!

MARISOL CARLOS HERERRO

She/Her/Hers

Branch: California Online

Membership in AAUW: First year

Member of AAUW California

State Public Policy Committee: First year (interned last year)

What do you find most important about Public Policy and Public Policy work?

“Public policy is important because it establishes power building for marginalized groups and serves as a tool for political equity. As public policy shapes social change through the implementation of social resource programs and upholding of human rights, its importance serves in it contributing to meeting the needs of the general public for common wellness and I truly value that!”



MISSY MACEYKO

She/Her/Hers

Branch: Long Beach

Membership in AAUW: 8 years

Member of AAUW California

State Public Policy Committee: 8 years

What do you find most important about Public Policy and Public Policy work?

“Public policy work is important for advancing, regulating, and institutionalizing more equitable practices. It is important to advance specific pieces of legislation through advocacy. It is equally important to educate others about the ways in which policy impacts their everyday lives while also offering them ways that they can impact meaningful change.”



NANCY P. MAJOR

She/Her/Hers

Branch: Marin

Membership in AAUW: 28 years

Member of AAUW California

State Public Policy Committee: 3 years

What do you find most important about Public Policy and Public Policy work?

“Furtherance of AAUW Mission”



KATHI HARPER

She/Her/Hers

Branch: CA Online

Membership in AAUW: 20 years

Member of AAUW California

State Public Policy Committee: 9 years

What do you find most important about Public Policy and Public Policy work?

"I joined AAUW because of our mission, and I find that doing Public Policy work is the most effective way of carrying out that mission. Our "Trek" and scholarship programs provide wonderful opportunities for girls and women on an individual basis, but Public Policy work has the potential to effect positive change for ALL women and girls in California, for now and for the future."



GINNY HATFIELD

She/Her/Hers

Branch: San Fernando Valley

Membership in AAUW: 31 years

Member of AAUW California

State Public Policy Committee: 8 years

What do you find most important about Public Policy and Public Policy work?

"Educating members, engaging them, and advocating for the passage of legislation inherent to our priorities."



ROHAN BHARDWAJ

He/They/Theirs

Branch: Long Beach

Membership in AAUW: First year

Member of AAUW California

State Public Policy Committee: First year
(interned last year)

What do you find most important about Public Policy and Public Policy work?

"I believe public policy is at the heart of democracy. It requires constant participation and advocacy to ensure it reflects the needs of our communities. That's why it is so important to remain engaged, to speak up, and to remind our government that it is accountable to its constituents."



CLAIRE NOONAN

She/Her/Hers

Branch: Silicon Valley

Membership in AAUW: 47 years

**Member of AAUW California
State Public Policy Committee:** 12 years

What do you find most important about Public Policy and Public Policy work?

"Determining legislation to support"



LAURINDA OCHOA

She/Her/Hers

Branch: Danville-Alamo-Walnut Creek

Membership in AAUW: 2 years

**Member of AAUW California
State Public Policy Committee:** 2 years

What do you find most important about Public Policy and Public Policy work?

"It's increasingly important to work to protect the future for all women, including my daughters and young granddaughters. Our social and political rights, our economic security, our access to equal, quality education, and our opportunities to contribute fully to society seem to be under attack. Our rights as women are not guaranteed. AAUW Public policy work is important to me as an opportunity to work together as a team to protect our futures and the futures of all women, young and older."



Your Vote
Is your
Voice.
Be Heard.

Special Election November. 4th

RECENT NEWS

**AAUW California Public Policy Shares
Education-Focused, Nonpartisan Guidance on
Proposition 50**

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – September 26, 2025 – AAUW California today released nonpartisan voter-education information to help Californians understand Proposition 50, a statewide ballot measure on the November 4, 2025, special election. [Read full news release.](#)

[Press Room](#)

[2025 Bill Tracker](#)

[Take Action Now](#)