



December 2025

Welcome to the *California Compass*, the monthly roadmap sent to every member from your state AAUW organization!



Charmen's Compass Callouts: A message from Charmen Goehring, AAUW California President

As we head into a major holiday season, a lot seems uncertain right now. With attacks on education (specifically higher education), the environment, immigrants, and now even nurses, there is one thing that is certain - AAUW, and your membership in AAUW, are extremely important. As one of the longest-standing organizations focused on improving the lives of women and girls, AAUW is a trusted, proven entity. However, in our changing, more diverse society, our AAUW branches need to adapt to meet the needs of our communities or risk fading into history.

Many of you know that I am passionate about diversity, equity, and inclusion work in my life and that I feel it is important for branches to engage in some introspective work. Our national staff, NCCWSL students, and Tech Trek campers all reflect our diverse communities, but most often our branches do not. Many of us feel that we are welcoming and open to others joining us, and wonder why they don't. This is where "mirrorwork" comes in. We can be curious and seek out information about other cultures, races, religions, ages, and abilities. We can ask ourselves how we

show up in our branches and in our relationships.

I recently read an article written by a Black woman about her experiences in mostly white non-profit organizations. It was powerful and challenging to read. Although it is only one woman's story, I have heard many others talk about the same issues, and believe it or not, I have faced some of them myself as a younger woman in AAUW. I would encourage you to step outside your comfort zone, read [Ragan Mozee's article](#), and consider how her experiences might be similar to those of women in our communities who might be fantastic new members but whom we have not made space for in our branches. I would love to hear from those of you who read the article.

Another opportunity to engage in mirrorwork is to join our *Four Pivots* book study. We will be examining Pivot 2: "From Transactional to Transformative", which fits in with the article shared above. How do we show belonging, care, and vulnerability in our relationships? We will be meeting on Zoom on Thursday, January 15th, at 7 pm. You can register [HERE](#).

Thank you for being a member of AAUW, whether you are a newer member or more experienced, an active leader or a more passive member. We benefit from all of our members and appreciate your support of our AAUW mission - gender equity for all.



National Needle: News from AAUW National

1. Check out the Virtual Economic Empowerment Trainings available to you and those in your networks. These expert-led trainings focus on salary negotiation, financial literacy, and career development to help us advance professionally and economically. You can find more information [HERE](#).
 2. Sign AAUW's Pledge for Equity [HERE](#).
 3. Invest in a more equitable future for women and girls this holiday season by making a year-end donation to the Greatest Needs Fund, Defend Higher Education Fund, or the new Public Policy Fund. You can do so [HERE](#).
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On the Horizon: Highlights from the State Committees

Public Policy

Last month, the Trump administration took a major step toward dismantling the U.S. Department of Education (ED). [AAUW released a statement](#) underscoring what's at stake and rejecting the idea that education should be reduced to workforce development alone. AAUW National and AAUW California have been taking action in response – and we have pathways for you to act, so please join us! Collective action is important, and moments of coming together are particularly useful for combating isolation, disempowerment, and division, *and* (bonus!) they help create change.

For more on what you can do, individually or together, to push back against the dismantling of Higher Education, see the December issue of [Public Policy News](#).

Missy Maceyko and Amy Hom, Directors, Public Policy Co-chairs,
publicpolicy@aauw-ca.org

Strategic Planning

This is the time of year when people express gratitude by word and deed. I was recently ill with a nasty bug, and my AAUW circle of friends picked up prescriptions, took care of my cat, and brought me food I could eat. I grew up in an AAUW family with my parents telling my sister and me, no expensive weddings, but money for education will be there for you. AAUW is an important organization that is still needed to fight for women and girls. Please consider giving to AAUW's Greatest Needs (9110), Defend Higher Education (4513), or Public Policy (4513) fund by clicking [HERE](#). Membership dues account for only 9% of the National budget. To see the 2024 annual report, click [HERE](#).

We are an organization of volunteers; even if you cannot give money, you can support your local branch and say thank you to everyone who makes things happen. Thank you for reading!

Donna Holmes, Director, Strategic Plan Consultant, strategic-planning@aauw-ca.org

Nominations and Elections

How about helping fill a holiday wish for the AAUW California State Board? Consider running for a director or the secretary position in 2026. If that is a step too far, please consider volunteering at the branch board level. Questions? Contact me or our State President, statepresident@aauw-ca.org
Gail Swain, Nominations and Elections Chair, nominations@aauw-ca.org

Communications

Did you know that you can find many of the past AAUW California Webinars on the Webinars page ([HERE](#))? Recent webinars, such as those on higher education, artificial intelligence, Project 2025, and more, can be found there. Take a look!

Michelle Baer, Director, Communications Chair, communications@aauw-ca.org

Branch Development

What motivated you to join AAUW? What would encourage you to become more engaged in AAUW? Suggest ideas for programs or events you would like to participate in to your branch leaders and to us at branch-development@aauw-ca.org

Sigrid Moranz and Rebecca Gomez, Directors, Branch Development Co-chairs, branch-development@aauw-ca.org

AAUW Fund

Have you been planning to make a donation to the AAUW? Have you always thought about joining The Legacy Circle? It's not too late to accomplish these goals in 2025. If you make a donation online, it will certainly be included in the 2025 total. If you want to make a donation by check, get it to your Branch Fund Officer ASAP. Not sure what Fund # to support? Please consider the following: AAUW Greatest Needs Fund #9110, Defend Higher Education Fund #4513, and Public Policy Fund #4514. Right now, all donations are being matched up to \$100,000, thanks to the generosity of AAUW state and national leaders. To learn more and/or make a planned gift and join the Legacy Circle, fill out the form [HERE](#).

Remember, these actions will help your branch earn the Advancement star in the Five-Star Program.

Deanna Arthur, Director, AAUW Fund Chair, aauwfund@aauw-ca.org



Book Bearings: Mission-related book recommendations from the bookshelves of the state leadership team and committee members.

***The Doctors Blackwell: How Two Pioneering Sisters Brought Medicine to Women and Women to Medicine* by Janice P. Nimura (2021)**

Recommended by Marty McKnew, AAUW California Governance and Parliamentarian Chair.

- Marty describes the book as “The story of two sisters who decided to become doctors when all the doors to women were closed. Elizabeth Blackwell became the first woman in America to receive an M.D., her sister Emily the third.”
- Marty states, “We should never take for granted what our foremothers had to endure to achieve their dreams. The status of women and medicine in the 19th century was appalling.”

***Kiyo's Story: A Japanese-American Family's Quest for the American Dream* by Kiyo Sato (2009).**

Recommended by Donna Holmes, AAUW California Director, Strategic Planning Consultant

- Donna states the book is about “Kiyo [a Sacramento native]...whose family was interned at the Postern Interment Camp, but that is just a piece of the story.”
- Donna says the book was meaningful because “it gave me a much larger picture of the US’s treatment of Japanese immigrants, their attitudes, and perseverance...This is a large history in California, and it is beautifully presented in this book.”



Wayfinder Links: Helpful links to the AAUW California or AAUW National websites

The AAUW Silicon Valley Branch presented *Higher Education at Risk – And How You Can Help Protect It* webinar on December 3rd. Click [HERE](#) to listen to Meghan Kissell, AAUW Senior Director of Policy and Member Advocacy, provide an in-depth discussion on how the current administration's policies are impacting higher education, learn the latest repercussions for admissions, Pell Grants, student loan forgiveness, student civil rights protections, and the experiences of international students.



Monthly Trivia Question:

In an AAUW research report published in 1885, what prevailing myth was disproved?

Click [HERE](#) for contest rules and to enter your response.

Answer to last month's question ('In 1913, the Washington D.C. Branch of AAUW issued a study of civil service jobs that found women earned ___% of what men in similar roles earned.'): 78%. Only one person answered correctly. Congratulations to Faith Herschler!

Questions or Comments?

We would love to hear from you! You can reach the *California Compass* editors at cc@aauw-ca.org.

***California Compass* production acknowledgments:**

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AAUW's mission: To advance gender equity for women and girls through research, education, and advocacy.

[AAUW.org](https://www.aauw.org)

AAUW California's mission: AAUW California facilitates California branches in meeting the vision and mission of AAUW by providing programs, education and resources.

www.aauw-ca.org



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