



JANUARY 2026 | ISSUE 27

Public Policy News

A monthly dispatch from the AAUW California Public Policy Team

HAPPY NEW YEAR

Onward with hope and purpose

Happy New Year! As we step into the year ahead, we hope you have enjoyed the holidays with moments of rest, joy, and renewal. Even in challenging times, our shared values, our community, and our commitment to AAUW's values remain strong. The work we do matters, and together we bring clarity, courage, and compassion. May this new year restore our energy, spark fresh inspiration, and remind us of the power we have when we stand together. Thank you for all you do – onward with hope and purpose.

In solidarity,
Amy and Missy

LOBBY DAY 2026

Sign up by January 16

Calling all AAUW Advocates! All members are encouraged to participate in Lobby Day 2026 and help advance our priority legislation, including an AAUW California-sponsored bill package focused on human trafficking and enforcement. This year, we are taking a significantly new approach to Lobby Day, with in-district meetings serving as our primary strategy.

See pages 3-5 for a detailed article and information about the event. **Sign up to participate [HERE](#).**

Upcoming Events

Mark Your Calendars!



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, 2026 1:00-2:00pm**. Register [HERE](#)

AAUW California School Board Project presents a Half Day Symposium: Defending the Frontline of Democracy - **Saturday Jan 31, 2026 9:00am-12:30pm** via Zoom. Register [HERE](#).

If you missed it...

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. Find the recording [HERE](#).

BRANCH PUBLIC POLICY CHAIRS' MEETING

NEXT PEER GROUP MEETING

Friday February 6, 2026
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!

If you miss a Peer Group Meeting, Recordings and Slide Decks can be found [HERE](#) under Public Policy

2026 Meetings:

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](#).

FOLLOW US ON RESISTBOT [HERE](#).



Three Steps to Take Action in January

Focus: The Assault on K-12 Education



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 **COMBATTING THE ASSAULT ON K-12 EDUCATION**.

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: Combatting the Assault on K-12 Education

STEP 1: Self-Focused: Education



- **Federal level:** For recent commentary on the administration's efforts to dismantle the Dept of Education, read the [12/16/25 testimony](#) of Denise Forte, President and CEO of EdTrust, to the U.S. Senate Democratic Caucus's "Education Spotlight Forum". (EdTrust is a leader of the Higher Education coalition of which AAUW is a member.)
- **State level:** Next year, Californians will elect a new State Superintendent of Public Instruction. One likely hot topic will be the candidates' positions on the report released in December by the PACE (Policy Analysis for California Education) consortium about the lack of effective governance in education and how it might be improved. Read the 12/4/25 CalMatters overview [article](#) which includes a link to the full report.

1

STEP 2: Other-Focused: Education & Connection



- Reach out to two branch members and register along with them to attend the AAUW California School Board Project online symposium, 1/31/26, "The School Board Project: Defending the Frontline of Democracy". See info below & the flyer on page 7 of this newsletter. Register for the event [HERE](#).

2

STEP 3: Politically-Focused



- Download the 5 Calls app (<https://5calls.org>) to your smartphone and follow the instructions to call your Congressional representative and U.S. Senators Padilla and Schiff, requesting their action to "Stop the Dismantling of Federal Education Programs and Workforce" (<https://5calls.org/issue/protect-department-of-education/>)

3

School Board Project Virtual Symposium

Please join our virtual symposium on **January 31, 2026 9:00am to 12:30pm PT** and learn:

- How the federal government's restrictive laws impact California's protective laws
- How to effectively advocate for AAUW values with your local school board members
- Why advocating on behalf of LGBTQ+ students is a crucial AAUW priority
- How to support progressive school board members in conservative districts
- How to respond to parent's concerns with accurate information
- How to form and sustain valuable coalitions in your district with like-minded organizations
- How to identify, recruit and support school board candidates who share AAUW's values

See the flyer on page 7 of this newsletter, and **register for the event [HERE](#)**.



Lobby Day 2026 - A New Approach for Greater Impact

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



Calling all AAUW Advocates - get ready for Lobby Days 2026!

Lobby Days offer an important opportunity for you to meet with legislative offices and advance our priority bills. We encourage all members to participate!

What kinds of bills will you be advocating for in 2026? In the fall of 2025, AAUW California was approached by Asm. Krell's office to sponsor two bills related to human trafficking education and enforcement. We are currently in the process of working with Asm. Krell and her staff to shape the language and direction of this legislation. In early March, the Public Policy Committee will work together to select at least one additional bill from our Legislative Agenda to prioritize. All of our top bills are carefully chosen based on their timeliness, likelihood of passage, and alignment with our core values and public policy priorities.



This year we're also introducing a new approach to Lobby Days that prioritizes in-district meetings. This shift was inspired, in part, by our recent trials and tribulations with Lobby Days meetings in Sacramento. Specifically over the past two years, it has become increasingly difficult to secure meetings with legislative offices in the capitol as they are routinely overbooked. Overbooking means that meetings tend to be confirmed at the last minute, short (most last no more than 15 minutes), and held with staffers rather than legislators (84 of 94 in 2025).

This proposed shift to in-district meetings for Lobby Days was also inspired, in part, by the experiences of the Redlands Branch, who took a different approach and saw remarkable results. By scheduling Lobby Days in-district, they were able to secure eight in-person meetings. These meetings were confirmed well in advance, were longer, and offered a much better chance of speaking directly with legislators. We highlighted their success in our November Public Policy survey, and members overwhelmingly indicated a preference for meeting with district offices.

For all of these reasons, **in-district meetings will be our primary strategy for Lobby Day 2026.** As we transition to this model, we will also keep a Zoom meeting option for members who are unable to travel to in-district meetings.

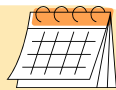
To be involved in this year's Lobby Days, please complete and return this [Sign-up Form](#) and let us know whether you prefer to participate in person in the district office or virtually via Zoom. We are also seeking volunteers to serve as Team Leaders - a critical role responsible for scheduling district office meetings, coordinating team members, and ensuring everyone understands their tasks and logistics.

We look forward to your participation! See the next page for key details and dates.

Breakdown of Lobby Days 2026

Key Dates

Mark Your Calendars!



January 6, 2026

Lobby Day Interest Survey will be sent

January 16, 2026

Survey responses due

January 30, 2026

Team Rosters, including Team Leaders, will be published

February 9, 2026

Team Leaders begin scheduling in-district meetings. Recommended lead time is minimum 45 days

March 16, 2026

Bill packets (bill language + talking points) available

March 23, 2026

Lobby Day Training Webinar

March 26-April 6, 2026

Legislature's Spring Recess

March 27-April 17, 2026

Meeting window for in-district meetings

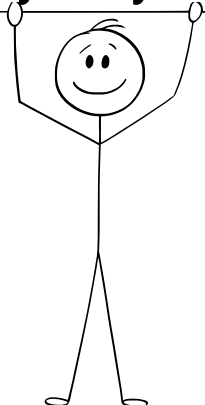
April 8-10, 2026

Meeting window for Zoom meetings

A Few Important Notes About The New Lobby Days Model

- **In-district meetings** will be longer, will be with your own representative's office, and are more likely to be directly with the legislator - although they may still be referred to staff, depending upon the legislator's schedule demands.
- **Some in-district meetings may include AAUW members from multiple branches.** Each team will need to identify 4-5 speakers. Even if not everyone presents, members are encouraged to demonstrate strong support, and legislative offices will appreciate meeting such an engaged group of constituents.
- **Team Leaders, volunteers from your branch or district, will take on a new role.** They will not only be responsible for meeting with team members, dividing up speaking responsibilities, and leading the actual meetings-now they will also be responsible for scheduling the in-district meetings.
- **Zoom meetings** will remain brief - only 15-20 minutes in length. They are likely to be with staff, and may be with a legislative office which is not your own. This is because in-person meetings will be prioritized. Zoom meetings will be scheduled by the Public Policy Committee.
- **Flexibility is essential for everyone.** Schedules shift, offices change availability, and things happen outside of our control.
- **Most of all - enjoy the experience.** Lobby Day is a wonderful opportunity to connect with lawmakers, share our values, and advocate for AAUW California's priority bills - legislation that will make a real difference in the lives of women and girls as well as those impacted by social and racial injustices.

Lobby Days 2026



Tips for Scheduling In-District Meetings

The recommended meeting window overlaps with spring recess because some legislators take district meetings during this time. During session, legislators are often available for Thursday afternoon, Friday and occasionally Saturday in-district meetings. Alternatively, instead of a meeting in the district office, you may want to invite your legislator to join your branch meeting. They will be happy to share their work as well as hear about our priority bills. This is a terrific way to foster your relationships with legislators.

FAQs - Lobby Days 2026

	In-District Meetings	Zoom Meetings
How long are meetings with legislators?	In-district meetings will be longer, depending on the legislator's availability.	Zoom meetings will remain brief - only 15-20 minutes in length.
Am I meeting with my own legislators?	In-district meetings will be with your own representative's office, and are more likely to be directly with the legislator - although they may still be referred to staff, depending upon the legislator's schedule demands.	Zoom meetings may be with a legislative office that is not your own and are likely to be with staff.
What am I talking to legislators about?	You will be telling them about our priority legislation. We'll give you information about this, and about how to present this legislation, in March 2026.	You will be telling them about our priority legislation. We'll give you information about this, and about how to present this legislation, in March 2026.
Who is on my meeting team?	AAUW Public Policy will create your team. It will be made up of a team leader and team members. Some in-district meetings may include AAUW members from multiple branches. We will notify you of the details on January 30, 2026.	AAUW Public Policy will create your team, made up of a team leader and team members from all over the state. We will notify you of the details on January 30, 2026.
Tell me more about the team leader role?	Team Leaders are volunteers from your branch or district. They are responsible for meeting with all team members, making sure that all team members have information about priority bills, dividing up speaking responsibilities, and leading the actual meetings. For in-district meetings, they are also responsible for coordinating with local offices to schedule the meetings and conveying that information to all team members.	Team Leaders are volunteers from all over the state. They are responsible for meeting with all team members, making sure that all team members have information about priority bills, dividing up speaking responsibilities, and leading the actual meetings.
Will I get a chance to speak during the meeting?	The team leader will coordinate speaking roles. Because some in-district meetings may include AAUW members from multiple branches, the team leader will need to identify 4-5 people to speak. Even if not everyone presents, members are encouraged to demonstrate strong support, and legislative offices will appreciate meeting such an engaged group of constituents.	The team leader will coordinate speaking roles. Everyone on the team should have a chance to speak briefly during the meeting.
Who will schedule the meetings with legislators?	The Team Leader will schedule the meeting(s).	The AAUW Public Policy Team will schedule the meeting(s).

Demystifying Public Policy

Infographic By Missy Maceyko

Do you have to have a degree in political science or a background in law to do public policy work?

This is a question that we get all the time! The answer, of course, is no.

To address this question more formally, and help to demystify public policy, co-director Missy Maceyko recently developed a “How to Do Public Policy” workshop for social science researchers. This is a demographic of people who study important social issues and trends--those that are often addressed through legislative solutions; however, these researchers are not always involved in the process of policy development and legislative advocacy. This workshop was designed to address this gap, providing resources for researchers who want to get more involved, but who are not sure where to begin.

The session was launched in-person at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association, held in New Orleans, Louisiana from November 18-23, 2025. Missy has been asked to hold additional sessions, virtually and in-person, in 2026. This infographic was provided as part of the workshop. We thought you might find it useful, as well!

LEGISLATIVE ACTIVISM

How to get involved in the creation, introduction, advancement, and passage of meaningful legislation.

STEP 1. NAME THE PROBLEM

Name a problem in the world that you want to solve. Ask questions like-What is the outcome you want to see? How can this be advanced by legislative solution? What/where can be reasonably addressed by policy in my locality?



STEP 2. DO THE RESEARCH

What kind of data do you need to develop an appropriate legislative solution that is also marketable? Research existing laws, talk to communities who will be impacted, compile relevant data, and consider financial and other costs. How might your own research be of use?



STEP 2.5. DRAFT THE BILL

If needed, draft the text of the legislation that you want to see advanced.



STEP 3. PACKAGE IT & SHOP IT

Frame the problem and legislative solution so that it appeals to legislative offices, coalition partners, impacted communities, and other interested constituencies. Your first job is to get the bill placed. Your second is to garner wide support to help it move through Assembly.



STEP 4. FOLLOW THAT BILL!

Follow the bill as it is introduced and moves through committees, chambers, and to the governor's desk. Intervene as needed to help it continue on its journey. Keep in touch with stakeholders and provide expert testimony, letters of support, additional research, public education, and calls for advocacy, as needed.



STEP 5. CELEBRATE

Congratulations! You have either passed new legislation OR created a pathway for you to move similar legislation in the future.



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Contact Missy Maceyko for references and questions
missy@willingobservers.com

AAUW California Public Policy Symposium



THE SCHOOL BOARD PROJECT: DEFENDING THE FRONTLINE OF DEMOCRACY

 **Saturday, Jan 31st**

 **9am - 12:30pm**

Virtual

**FREE
PUBLIC EVENT
REGISTER HERE**



FEDERAL CHALLENGES TO CALIFORNIA LAWS

Learn where California's protective laws against book banning, curriculum censorship, and attacks on LGBTQ+ students currently stand in light of recent Federal education policy changes
Richard Barrera, MPP – Trustee of the San Diego School Board

HOW TO EFFECTIVELY MONITOR SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS

Gain knowledge and skills to confidently assess school board compliance with state law and report non-compliance
Brianna Mullen, MPP – Education Advocate, Public School Defenders Hub

CHALLENGES FACING CALIFORNIA SCHOOL BOARDS

Get insights from a students' advocate, parents' advocate, and current board member
Ariel Bustamante – Equity and Compliance Expert, L.A. LGBTQ Center
Lisa Gross, Ph.D. – California PTA Board of Managers
Nancy Young, MA – Murietta School Board Trustee

EFFECTIVE RECRUITING OF SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATES

Hear how to recruit and support great candidates from a national leader on running school board campaigns
Kyrstin Schuette – Executive Director, School Board Integrity Project

COALITION BUILDING FOR GREATER COMMUNITY IMPACT

Engage with two AAUW California Public Policy Committee members from the Danville-Alamo-Walnut Creek branch who formed a successful local education coalition
Ogie Strogatz, MSPH and Laurinda Ochoa, JD, Co-Founders, Lift Up Public Schools Coalition

WHO SHOULD ATTEND:

Concerned parents and guardians, educators, nonprofits, civic leaders, advocates, equity activists, legal advisors, media, local, and state agencies.

AAUW members are encouraged to attend, but membership is not required.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE SCHOOL BOARD PROJECT
aauw-ca.org/school-board-project-toolkit/

publicpolicy@aauw-ca.org
aauw-ca.org/public-policy