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## January 2026

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

2026. How is it even possible that we are already here? I decided that welcoming the new year on a beach would be a nice way to start 2026. So, I booked myself a few days in Pacific Grove where, instead of struggling with resolutions, I made a list of my 2025 wins and created a vision board of what I hoped to see in 2026 in my personal, work, and community life, including my next role in AAUW. My hope is that starting the year with a positive outlook will set that intention for my year. I know there will always be struggles in each area of my life, but I also know that I have a sisterhood of AAUW friends who can help me when I stumble. It is one of the best benefits of my long-time membership, and I thank each of you for making AAUW, especially here in California, the special organization that it is!

This month, we have an opportunity to engage in ongoing mirrorwork by joining our *Four Pivots* book study. We will be examining Pivot 2: "From Transactional to Transformative", which asks us, "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](#).

We have another exciting opportunity to learn from an amazing scientist, courtesy of the AAUW Oregon Online Branch. On Tuesday, January 27, 2026, at 7 pm, California members are invited to a talk by Dr. Charity Woodrum, a NASA Post Doctoral Program Fellow working on the James Webb Space Telescope and an AAUW Oregon Online Branch member. Registration for the Zoom meeting is available [HERE](#). As a cool bonus, there is a documentary, *Space, Hope and Charity*, about Dr. Woodrum's journey from poverty to NASA, and we are given access to a special screening, available January 12-31st. You can get the link [HERE](#) (use the password *woody14*) and watch it at your leisure prior to the January 27th talk. Many thanks to the Oregon Online Branch for this fantastic educational opportunity!

I was heartened to receive our monthly notice from National regarding our dues deposit- it showed over 100 new members in the month of November! Imagine the impact on our branches, communities, and state if we saw those increases each month! As more of us become familiar with and utilize tools such as *Volunteers First* and the *Four Pivots*, and as we engage in social justice and advocacy work through the School Board Project, Lobby Days, and more, we will attract more people to AAUW and our branches. My New Year's wish is that we will be open and welcoming to anyone who finds our branches and wants to participate. In this complicated era, many are feeling the need to *do something*. Let's give them a place to belong and collectively help make our communities better for the women and girls living in them.

One last note, I want to celebrate the San Francisco Branch on its 140th anniversary this year! I was fortunate to attend their official celebration last month, and wow, what a history they have! Very few organizations last over 100 years, let alone 140! I hope everyone will give a little applause for the AAUW San Francisco Branch! Congratulations!



### National Needle: News from AAUW National

1. Learn more about *The Future of Higher Education* by attending the webinar on January 12, 2026, at 11 am PT. The panel will explore current realities, long-term effects, and pathways forward. Register [HERE](#).

2. The Department of Justice (DOJ)'s new Title VI "merit" rule eliminates disparate-impact protections, making it harder to challenge "neutral" policies that consistently harm communities of color, women and girls of color, immigrants, and disabled students. At the same time, the administration is hollowing out the U.S. Department of Education, scattering key K-12 and higher-education programs across other agencies and raising serious questions about how students' rights will be enforced. Urge robust congressional oversight of DOJ's civil-rights rollback and the efforts to gut the Department of Education by signing up for the AAUW Action Network [HERE](#).
3. This year marks 50 years of AAUW members in the Washington, D.C. area engaging in volunteer advocacy as the Capitol Lobby Corps. Every month, they visit offices on Capitol Hill to discuss and educate legislators and their staff about AAUW's key issues. We are grateful for their impactful congressional outreach and dedication to advancing AAUW's mission.
4. Mark your calendars for the next All Members Virtual Gathering on February 18 at 1:30 PT. The invitation and registration link will be coming to your inbox shortly.



## On the Horizon: Highlights from the State Committees

### Tech Trek

Tech Trek California is a 100% volunteer-operated, branch-sponsored program of AAUW California, which means we can't do it without the help of \$\$ or time from members.

Remember that ALL Tech Trek volunteers must complete the Volunteer Conduct Agreement [HERE](#) if they interact with potential campers, schools, or families on behalf of Tech Trek.

**Mary Isaac**, Tech Trek Program Director, [techtrek@aauw-ca.org](mailto:techtrek@aauw-ca.org)

### Public Policy

#### Take Action in 2026: Sign up for Lobby Days & the School Board Project Symposium!

Join us for an exciting new approach to Lobby Days in 2026, with a primarily in-

person in-district meeting strategy, and help us advance our priority legislation, including an AAUW California-sponsored bill package focused on human trafficking and enforcement. Please complete and return this [Sign-Up Form](#) by January 16, 2026. Let us know if you want to visit a district office or lobby via Zoom. For more information, key dates, and FAQs, see this detailed [article](#).

The School Board Project offers ways to push back against attacks on public education. Check out 2026 goals at the virtual Symposium, *The School Board Project: Defending the Frontline of Democracy*, on January 31, 2026, 9 am to 12:30 pm PT. See the [flyer](#), and register for the event [HERE](#).

Please share the latest issue of [Public Policy News](#) with your branches, your friends, and your network.

**Missy Maceyko and Amy Hom**, Directors, Public Policy Co-chairs, [publicpolicy@aauw-ca.org](mailto:publicpolicy@aauw-ca.org)

## Nominations and Elections

Our 2026 state board election will be from April 18th to May 8th. We are seeking six new board members. One will be the board secretary, four will be two-year directors, and one will be a one-year director. Want to know more? Please contact [nominating@aauw-ca.org](mailto:nominating@aauw-ca.org).

**Gail Swain**, Nominations and Elections Chair, [nominating@aauw-ca.org](mailto:nominating@aauw-ca.org)

## Strategic Planning

Happy New Year! There is so much to celebrate this year, including our country's 250th Anniversary and AAUW's 145th Anniversary. Unlike most of the country, AAUW is powered primarily by volunteers. Here in California, only two people receive salaries and they are both part-time, our office manager and lobbyist. Everything else happens because someone said, "I can do that or I can't right now, but I can support it."

**Donna Holmes**, Director, Strategic Plan Consultant, [strategic-planning@aauw-ca.org](mailto:strategic-planning@aauw-ca.org)

## Branch Development

Bring a friend or neighbor to your next branch meeting or event to introduce them to AAUW and all it offers. If you belong to other organizations or book clubs, invite those members to one of your events. Our mission to support women and girls through education, research, and advocacy sends a strong signal to attract new members. There are plenty of opportunities for members to **do something!** Let's show off our strengths!

**Sigrid Moranz and Rebecca Gomez**, Directors, Branch Development Co-chairs, [branch-development@aauw-ca.org](mailto:branch-development@aauw-ca.org)



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

***On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century* by Timothy Snyder (2017).**

Recommended by Amy Hom, AAUW California Director & Public Policy Co-chair.

- Amy explains this book “is a short, accessible, and timely read. Snyder, a historian of Central and Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and the Holocaust, distills essential lessons from 20th-century history to show how Americans can safeguard democratic freedoms and fight back against rising autocracy.”
- Amy recommends this book because it “offers practical guidance for both individual and collective resistance to the looming threat of authoritarianism.”

***This is How It Always Is* by Laurie Frankel (2017).**

Recommended by Claudia Chandler, Communications Committee Member

- Describing the book, Claudia explains, “The author writes articulately about the challenges related to raising and honoring a child's choice, the impacts of the transgender person on family members, and the challenges around having close family friends. While not an autobiographical story, the author says that the book draws heavily on her personal experiences.”
- Claudia recommends this book because “this is a beautifully written book that helped me better understand the transgender person, their perspective, and the impacts on family dynamics. Each family member has their own individual issues and flaws that the author takes time to describe and develop. This character development lays the foundation to expand on how each person, in their own way, loves and protects the uniqueness of the youngest child who doesn't know if s/he wants to be male or female.”

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

### Membership Best Practices Webinar

Click [HERE](#) to learn about how four branches, each with varying demographics, gain and retain members. Carlsbad (NM), Morgan Hill (CA), North Hills Pittsburgh (PA), and Rapid City (SD)

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### Monthly Trivia Question:

**AAUW members have supported the legalization of abortion and the ERA since what year?**

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

*Answer to last month's question ('In an AAUW research report published in 1885, what prevailing myth was disproved?'): That college impairs a woman's fertility. Congratulations to the contest winners: Steffanie Roche, Janice Muller, and Nancy Turner.*

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### Questions or Comments?

We would love to hear from you! You can reach the *California Compass* editors at [cc@aauw-ca.org](mailto: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](http://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](http://www.aauw-ca.org)



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