

Board to Board

A Communication from the AAUW California Board to Branch Boards

Standing together for equity



[View in browser.](#)

In the wild, female elephants fiercely protect one another. When a sister suffers, they close ranks—standing guard, kicking up dirt to shield her from predators. We, humans, are the same. This is who we are meant to be for each other. Sometimes we stand at the center; sometimes we guard with fierce love. But the circle remains. One of my holiday gifts included this message, and it reminded me of our AAUW experience. May we be mindful of the female elephant's way as we begin 2026.

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Peer Group Meetings

All members are welcome to attend any peer group meeting. The peer group email announcement is sent to the branch chair(s) of the relevant committee and the branch president. Example: For the Public Policy Peer Group meeting, the email announcement will be sent to all branch public policy chair(s) and branch presidents.

Charmen's Chat

Charmen Goehring, President, AAUW California, statepresident@aauw-ca.org

Happy New Year! I can hardly believe we are already in 2026, and I only have six months left as President. This rewarding time has gone quickly! I hope that some of you are considering running for the Board, because we need passionate, energetic people with ideas to help our branches fulfill AAUW's mission and vision. See below under Nominations and Elections for more information.

We continue to explore the book, *The Four Pivots: Reimagining Justice, Reimagining Ourselves*, on Thursday, January 15, 2026, at 7 pm. This month, we will focus on Pivot 2: "From Transactional to Transformative", which looks at how we show up in relationships and in our branches and goes

hand-in-hand with the *Volunteers First* program. You can register [HERE](#). It is not necessary to have attended the first session: we welcome all who want to learn and grow.

I am also leading a discussion of the whole book for the AAUW Tarheel Branch (North Carolina's online branch) on March 8, 2026, from 12-1:30 pm PT. You are welcome to join this discussion as well. Please register [HERE](#).

Lastly, I want to commend you for leading our branches in so many amazing activities in your communities that helped make our AAUW mission known. Because of your efforts, we added over 100 new members in November alone. Imagine if we could do that every month! As we focus on our volunteers with the *Volunteers First* program, engage in social justice with the School Board Project and the Action Network, and assist girls in attending Tech Trek and college, we are showing our communities what a special organization we have, and many will naturally want to be a part of it. Let's be ready to greet all who seek us out.

Committee News

AAUW FUND [TOP](#)

Deanna Arthur, AAUW Fund Committee chair, aauwfund@aauw-ca.org.

WHAT'S GOING ON!

Unfortunately, scheduling Fellows to speak has not been as easy as it once was. Due to the recipient's personal choice, their information is not as readily available this year, likely reflecting the political moment we are in. In the past, we received addresses, phone numbers, and emails. This year, we were only given emails; therefore, it has been more challenging to make contact. Fellows are not required by National to have speaking engagements, so many do not respond to information requests. Please bear with us. We know that it is frustrating and much slower than usual. We are working diligently to honor all requests.

BRANCH DEVELOPMENT [TOP](#)

MEMBERSHIP AND LEADERSHIP [TOP](#)

Sigrid Moranz, Co-President-Elect, Leadership, branch-development@aauw-ca.org

Rebecca Gomez, Director, Membership, branch-development@aauw-ca.org

BRANCH ACTIVITY OF THE YEAR AWARD SUBMISSIONS ARE NOW OPEN!

Show Off Your Branch Activity and Earn an Award.

Has your branch created a *unique and inspiring* mission-based activity in the last year? Did it dazzle your members and your community? If so, we want to hear from you.

The Branch Activity of the Year Award is a chance to put forward a signature activity that your branch presented during the period of one year **ending on March 1, 2026**. This is your branch's chance to showcase and share an activity that is: Novel, Inspirational, Reproducible, and Reflective of AAUW's Mission and Image.

For more information and to submit your activity, please go to the [2026 Branch Activity of the Year](#).

What are the awards?

There will be three awards. Winning branches will be honored with a small prize and recognition at the 2026 AAUW California Annual Event, as well as on the state website, in social media, the *California Compass*, and other AAUW communications.

Winner Notification:

Winners will be contacted by April 1, 2026. **Winners will be expected to provide a 5–10-minute video presentation at the Annual Event on April 18, 2026.**

Questions? Please contact Patricia Souza at souzapellow@gmail.com

You can't win if you don't enter the contest!

FIVE STAR AND STRATEGIC PLAN [TOP](#)

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

GUILTY OF COMMITTING MY OWN PET PEEVE!

Last month's B2B, I noted the changes to the Five-Star Program that I thought National had not shared with the membership. My pet peeve is people who don't read their emails or don't read the whole email. Well, National had included the changes and details in the Membership Matters newsletter sent on October 30, 2025, which you can read [HERE](#).

National (Tremayne Parquet) will send an update to all branch presidents at the end of January on how their branch is doing at the halfway point. This will give five whole months to succeed in the Five-Star program.

In the area of maintaining 80% renewal of existing members, many membership directors and presidents have wondered why a member does not renew. In 2023, the state conducted a comprehensive survey looking for those answers. The questions asked are still applicable. Click [HERE](#) to see the study, which includes the questions. Feel free to use this to question members in your own branch who are not renewing. This is just another gem I found on the AAUW California website!

Happy New Year, and remember we are here for you, so "Ask Us First"!

The next Branch Development Peer Group will be on Tuesday, January 13th, at 7 pm. Click [HERE](#) to register. The topic will be How to plan for success in your branch and create a pipeline of volunteers prepared to take leadership roles. Bring your own ideas for a lively discussion among branch leaders.

COMMUNICATIONS [TOP](#)

Michelle Baer, Director, Communication Committee chair, communications@aauw-ca.org

HOW TO UPDATE AAUW NATIONAL-HOSTED WEBSITES: A NEW INTERACTIVE TRAINING FORMAT

Our most recent AAUW California training session on updating AAUW National–hosted websites took a brand-new approach — and it was a hit!

Instead of a traditional presentation, attendees were invited to submit their website questions in advance. Several participants were then asked to share their screens live during the session.

Together, we walked through their real branch website issues in real time and — under a little friendly pressure — updated their sites on the spot.

I wasn't entirely sure what to expect with this new format, but the result was energetic, collaborative, and incredibly practical. Participants left not only with answers, but with actual website improvements already made.

- Click [HERE](#) to view the video.
- Click [HERE](#) to download the presentation.

Next Up: Working with Images in Canva

Our next session will be held on **February 18th** at 7 p.m. and will focus on **creating and working with images in Canva** — perfect for newsletters, websites, and social media.

- Click [HERE](#) to register.

Prior to the session, you'll have the opportunity to describe the kind of image you want to create. During the session, we'll design examples live, based directly on your needs. Come ready to experiment and have fun while learning.

We hope you'll join us for another hands-on, problem-solving session!

The next Communication Peer Group will be on Wednesday, February 18th, at 7 pm. Click [HERE](#) to register. The topic will be: How to work with images within Canva

FINANCE [TOP](#)

Renee MacArthur, Chief Financial Officer, Finance Committee chair, cfo@aauw-ca.org

THERE'S MORE TO FUNDRAISING THAN JUST HAVING A GOOD IDEA

Join our January peer group meeting to share fundraising ideas and to learn about the reporting requirements for fundraising events, donations, and scholarships.

The next Finance Peer Group will be on Thursday, January 22nd, at 6:30 pm. Click [HERE](#) to register. The topic will be: Fundraising.

NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS [TOP](#)

Gail Swain, Nominations and Election chair, nominating@aauw-ca.org

ARE YOU CURIOUS HOW NOMINATIONS FOR THE STATE BOARD ARE GOING?

As you know, we have six openings on our State Board for the 2026 election: 1 Board Secretary, 4 two-year Directors, and 1 one-year Director. Currently, we have 4 nominations, 2 for a two-year Director and 2 for a one-year Director. The nomination deadline is March 14th, and the election will be from April 18th to May 8th. Candidates for the 2026 election are now listed in order of receipt of their nomination forms. That is also the order they will be listed on the ballot. Click [HERE](#) for everything you need to know about the upcoming election.

“What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead.” Nelson Mandela

PUBLIC POLICY [TOP](#)

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

TAKE ACTION IN 2026: SIGN UP FOR LOBBY DAYS & THE SCHOOL BOARD PROJECT SYMPOSIUM

Lobby Days 2026 - A New Approach for Greater Impact

Calling all AAUW Advocates! All members are encouraged to participate in Lobby Days 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 Days, **with in-district meetings serving as our primary strategy**.

To be involved in this year's Lobby Days, please complete and return this **[Sign-up Form](#)** by **January 16, 2026**, 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.

Key Dates:

- **January 6, 2026** - Lobby Days Interest Survey will be sent to all members via email
- **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 a minimum of 45 days)
- **March 16, 2026** - Bill packets (bill language + talking points) available
- **March 23, 2026** - Lobby Days 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

For more information about the Lobby Days event, including FAQs, see this detailed [article](#).

To better understand how our Lobby Days advocacy fits into the bigger picture, see the January issue of [Public Policy News](#) (p. 6), which features a **terrific infographic explaining the policy development and legislative advocacy process**.

The School Board Project: Defending the Frontline of Democracy

Please join our virtual symposium on **January 31, 2026, 9 am to 12:30 pm 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 parents' 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](#), and register for the event [HERE](#).

WEBINARS AND EVENTS

- 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, 1-2 pm. Register [HERE](#).**
- AAUW California School Board Project presents a Half-Day Symposium: *Defending the Frontline of Democracy* - **Saturday, Jan 31, 2026, 9-12:30 pm 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. See the recording, presentation, and supplemental materials [HERE](#).

Three Steps to Take Action in January: Combating 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.

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 the event [flyer](#), and register for the event [HERE](#).

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/>)

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

The next Public Policy Peer Group Meeting will be on Friday, February 6, 2026, at 1:30 pm Pacific. The Zoom link is made available to all peer group members. Anyone and everyone who is interested in public policy is welcome to join; please contact the Public Policy Co-chairs to request a link! Can't wait to see you there.

Program News

TECH TREK **TOP**

Mary Isaac, Tech Trek Program Director, and Tech Trek Committee chair, techtrek@aauw-ca.org.

AND SO THE TECH TREK NEW YEAR BEGINS! ONCE AGAIN, THE TECH TREK TRAIN IS ROLLING!

Thank you to all who submitted their camper requests by December 15th, and to those who forgot, we will use your branch numbers from last year for you to update in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which will be sent out under a separate email to the branch presidents of record mid-January with a due date of mid-February.

In case you have not seen it already, the document [**What's New in 2026**](#) details some important information about the upcoming season, starting with MOUs and CampDoc going live in a few weeks.

[**All documents**](#) have been updated on the Tech Trek webpages to help your branch share the excitement with schools, teachers, and families; rumor is that a few new videos aimed at teachers and volunteers will be dropping this month!

Here's to another STEMazing year thanks to your branch's commitment!

The Tech Trek Branch Coordinators Peer Group meets on the 3rd Thursday of each month at 6:30 pm. They have the link for these meetings. The topic will be: Tech Trek activities relevant to branch coordinators.

AAUW California

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