



# Public Policy News

A monthly dispatch from the AAUW California Public Policy Team

## 2026 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA AND LOBBY DAYS

AAUW California co-sponsors two important bills

March was an exceptionally busy month for the Public Policy Committee. We developed the AAUW California 2026 Legislative Agenda, then quickly transitioned into launching Lobby Days 2026, which is underway now through April 17.

This year, Lobby Days features a new in-district-focused approach. Over the course of three weeks, 192 members from 64 branches will meet with 96 legislative offices to advocate for three top-priority bills including AB 1766 and AB 1845 - both co-sponsored by AAUW California - which address human trafficking through education and prevention efforts in K-12 and higher education, respectively.

Read more about the 2026 Legislative Agenda and our three top-priority bills in the article on page 4.

## NEW REPORT FROM CREATORS OF PROJECT 2025

In January 2026, the Heritage Foundation, creators of Project 2025, released a new report entitled "[Saving America by Saving the Family: A Foundation for the Next 250 Years.](#)" Like Project 2025, the 2026 report offers a series of policy-based "solutions" to things that AAUW members rarely label as "problems," like no-fault divorce and the decline in teen pregnancy. If you want to learn more about report findings and recommendations, Missy is releasing a four-part series on her substack, [HERE.](#)

### Upcoming Events Mark Your Calendars!


AAUW California and Lift Up Public Schools Webinar Series, Part III - Why School Boards Matter to Everyone. **Thursday April 23, 2026 7:00-8:30pm PT.** Register [HERE.](#)

CA Superintendent of Public Instruction Candidate Forum - Sponsored by Contemporary Policy Institute with cohost AAUW California. **Saturday April 25, 2026 9:00-10:30am PT.** Register [HERE.](#)

### If you missed it...

- Lobby Days Training Webinar. See the recording [HERE.](#)
- AAUW California and Lift Up Public Schools Webinar Series
  - Part I - School Districts 101: How They Work. See the recording [HERE.](#)
  - Part II - School Board Trustee, Leadership. See the recording [HERE.](#)

## BRANCH PUBLIC POLICY CHAIRS' MEETING

**NEXT PEER GROUP MEETING**  
Friday April 3, 2026  
at 1:30pm Pacific  
**ZOOM LINK [HERE](#)** 

Click [HERE](#) for meeting information. 

**Peer Group Meetings are 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

Remaining Spring 2026 Meetings:

- ◀ Fri April 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@auw-ca.org](mailto:publicpolicy@auw-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 April

Focus: Human Trafficking Education and Prevention



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 HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND EXPLOITATION PREVENTION. 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](#).

## Take Action: Human Trafficking Education and Prevention

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### STEP 1: Self-Focused: Education



- Read the article about human trafficking by Nancy Major on page 3 of this newsletter.
- Learn how the [US Department of Justice has slashed funding](#) for programs combating child sex trafficking.
- For some positive news, watch California Attorney General Bonta's press conference announcing the results of a statewide human trafficking operation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uab6LERnpsY>
- Go to the California Family Justice Network's website to [check out the page listing all the Family Justice Centers in the state](#).

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### STEP 2: Other-Focused: Education & Connection



- Share what you've learned from Nancy Major's article and The Guardian article with 3-5 friends or family members.
- Meet up with 1-3 friends for coffee and watch Attorney General Bonta's press conference together [HERE](#). Then go together to visit the nearest Family Justice Center.
- Share information about the bills listed below by sharing [this link](#) or the QR code below. Ask friends, family, and organizations to join us in support.

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### STEP 3: Politically-Focused



- Learn about AAUW California's co-sponsored bill package related to the education and prevention of human trafficking. These are two of the three bills we will advance during Lobby Days.
- AB [1766](#) requires the Instructional Quality Commission to consider inclusion of curriculum providing for annual, developmentally appropriate lessons for grades K-12 about how to prevent human trafficking, how to prevent exploitation for labor and services, and how to stay safe from sexually exploitative materials and deepfakes online.
- AB [1845](#) requires postsecondary educational institutions, as part of their sexual harassment training for employees, to also include certain information related to human trafficking, and requires those institutions to ensure that each employee annually completes this training.

Scan this QR code to access the landing page for potential supporters of AB 1766 and AB1845. Download the QR code to share with other potential supporters [HERE](#).



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CLICK [HERE](#) TO ACCESS THE COMPREHENSIVE TAKE ACTION SPREADSHEET

# Learning More About Human Trafficking Can Help You Save A Life

By Nancy Major, Member AAUW California Public Policy Committee

Human Trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery, defined as the use of coercion, deception or fraud to hold a person against their will for purposes of labor, sex (e.g. exploitation, prostitution), or commercial sex acts (e.g., pornography, sex tourism).

Human trafficking is a huge global business, generating an estimated \$236 billion in illegal profits each year. Because of the underground nature of human trafficking, exact numbers are sometimes hard to pin down; however, according to 2022 data from the United Nations' International Labor Organization, there are an estimated 27.6 million human trafficking victims worldwide, with most exploitation occurring in the private sector, where 63% of victims are involved in forced labor and 23% are involved in sex trafficking, including commercial sex acts. Estimates of the number of people living under human trafficking in the United States today vary widely, with estimates ranging from 100,000 to 1 million people, depending on methodology.

Some studies also suggest that California is one of the largest sites of human trafficking in the United States. We see it in the news every day: in February of 2026, a Bay Area-wide enforcement sweep yielded 29 arrests and the rescue of 73 people suspected of being forced into sex work. Among the 73 sex-trafficking victims found by authorities were 10 minors, including a 12-year-old being trafficked in Oakland.

As indicated by the news story above, what we do know for sure about human trafficking is that it occurs everywhere. We also know that it tends to be invisible and that women and girls tend to make up the majority of trafficking victims (estimated at 61%). While women are still overwhelmingly trafficked for sexual exploitation, they are also exploited for forced labor, especially in domestic work.

The exact nature of what constitutes human trafficking today has been in flux, with significant shifts occurring during the pandemic when researchers and direct service providers saw a massive surge in forced labor trafficking. In 2021, for the first time since widespread record-keeping on human trafficking began, forced labor trafficking numbers exceeded sex trafficking numbers. According to the National Human Trafficking Hotline (2024), labor trafficking in the United States largely happens in construction, agricultural, and food service industries, but it can also appear in other sectors, such as hospitality and retail. **However, the most common venue for labor exploitation in the United States remains domestic work—the industry outside of sex exploitation that most commonly targets women.**

With so many people being trafficked it is important to know how trafficking begins and persists: by exploiting relationships and vulnerabilities. For adults, trafficking tends to begin when an individual trafficker offers promises of things like a job, money, luxury goods, a romantic relationship, protection, or drugs. These offers are intended to deceive, manipulate or force a potential victim into believing that the trafficker is offering a better life or relief from poverty, abuse, financial precarity, lack of housing, or fear of political or domestic violence. Systemic issues like gender discrimination or racism can increase the risk of being trafficked, especially for marginalized groups; however, any existing vulnerabilities, such as needing to make extra money to pay for college, can create a vulnerability for exploitation. We also see recruitment strategies for children and adults moving toward new forms of digital exploitation.



## Learning More About Human Trafficking Can Help You Save A Life (continued)

As is common in instances of domestic violence, traffickers often build a relationship with a victim before trapping them into cycles of emotional exploitation and debt bondage, creating different kinds of dependencies. In debt bondage, traffickers require victims to pay them back for “expenses” (e.g. travel expenses, room and board)--a process which can take years. Children are often recruited by family members, sometimes even sold to traffickers or forced into marriage. Threats of arrest, violence, deportation, threats to family, and withholding pay, food or medical care loom large, frequently leaving victims too afraid to speak out or get help.

For all of these reasons, we know that education, awareness, and stability are key components that play a critical role in fighting human trafficking: learning to set boundaries and build healthy relationships; learning more about the prevalence of exploitation in our own communities; educating ourselves, as well as educators and healthcare professionals, on how to identify and support victims; and creating more financial and social security, overall.

Although it is difficult to identify victims of human trafficking, **you, too, can play a role in helping to liberate victims by learning the signs of trafficking and exploitation and by taking action, locally.**

- To learn more about how to identify victims, attend a [free “fundamentals” of identifying human trafficking](#) webinar and/or access free resources through the [U.S. National Human Trafficking Hotline](#). Some key questions to ask yourself include: What assumptions do I make about those who engage in prostitution, drug use, or gang activity? Those who are financially unstable or those who feel pressured to stay in a job they hate? Am I missing an opportunity to intervene in trafficking because I assume that an individual, especially a young person, is responsible for their own behavior, including engaging in potentially illegal behavior? In other words, by checking our assumptions, we can be better equipped to help a person who is being exploited.
- If you identify a potential victim, call the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888.
- If you identify a potential child victim, you can find resources at the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, which specializes in support for underage victims of trafficking.
- If you want to engage in direct services, local shelters for trafficked women and girls are in need of financial resources. Organize a fundraiser. Ask one or more victims to talk to your branch.
- If you want to learn more about your area, your branch can contact your local District Attorney’s office to give a talk on human trafficking in your area and suggest additional ways to help.
- Some counties also have independent working [human trafficking commissions](#) who work in concert with academic researchers. Contact commissions and Non-Governmental Organizations who work in the field to ask what your branch can do to help.

And of course you can also help by supporting our A level priority legislation in 2026 (AB 1766 and AB 1845), which aims to help prevent human trafficking among children and young people in California.



**By supporting meaningful prevention legislation, identifying victims, and reporting tips, you might help save a life.**

# AAUW California 2026 Legislative Agenda is Set!

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

**The AAUW California 2026 Legislative Agenda is set!** This agenda reflects two months of thoughtful, rigorous work by the Public Policy Committee to evaluate newly introduced legislation and identify the bills most closely aligned with our Public Policy Priorities - Economic Security for All Women, Equal Access to Quality Public Education for All Students, Social and Racial Justice for All Members of Society, and Increased Representation of Women in Leadership.

**We are fortunate to be in California, where many legislators share our values and consistently introduce a strong - and often nation-leading - slate of aligned legislation.**

This year, in January and February, committee members reviewed 95 bills. In early March, we convened for an intensive two-day session to discuss and carefully consider each one. From this process, 34 bills were selected for inclusion in our agenda based on their alignment with AAUW priorities, the urgency of the issues they address, their likelihood of passage, and their potential for meaningful impact.

The three A priority bills - AB 1766, AB 1845, and AB 1876 - will receive the highest level of support and advocacy. This includes shaping bill language, negotiating amendments, providing testimony in committee hearings, and coordinating closely with stakeholders.



**AB 1766 and AB 1845** form a legislative package focused on human trafficking education and prevention. These bills are authored by Assemblymember Maggy Krell, whose office approached AAUW California to ask if we would be interested in sponsoring these two bills. The issue of human trafficking is an increasingly urgent one as traffickers continue finding new ways to exploit social media to target vulnerable youth. We were proud to step into a co-sponsorship role and help advance solutions to protect and educate young people across California.

# AAUW California 2026 Legislative Agenda is Set!

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

**AB 1766** requires the Instructional Quality Commission to consider inclusion of curriculum to educate students in grades K – 12 about human trafficking in order to protect children from predators that would exploit them. While current law provides for similar education for grades 7 – 12, we know that children younger than 12 are often vulnerable targets for human traffickers, so this bill calls for annual, developmentally appropriate lessons for grades K - 12 about how to prevent exploitation for labor and sex trafficking, how to stay safe from sexually exploitative materials and deepfakes online, how to develop foundational digital citizenship skills, and how to build skills that are critical for self-protection, including building healthy relationships.



**AB 1845** requires postsecondary educational institutions to include human trafficking within the Title IX umbrella of sex-based harassment. This means that human trafficking and exploitation would be included in the topic-areas covered in annual mandatory training currently required for employees and mandatory reporters, and that institutions adopt policies regarding identifying, reporting, and tracking human trafficking incidents that occur at the institution. Because human trafficking and exploitation is hiding in plain sight on many college campuses, the provisions of AB 1845 are critical for raising awareness of the issue on campus, which will aid prevention, as well as for providing necessary support for survivors.

**AB 1876**, our third A priority bill, prohibits a health plan or a health insurance provider from denying coverage, benefits, or limiting healthcare services to a person based on their race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex. Sex, here, includes sex assigned at birth and sex characteristics such as intersex traits, pregnancy, and gender identity. Passage of AB 1876 will strengthen protections against discrimination in healthcare coverage, benefits, and services in California in the face of federal shifts away from equity, inclusion, and nondiscrimination.



A similar bill, SB 418 (an A priority bill on our 2025 Leg Agenda), was vetoed by the Governor due to cost concerns. The provision that led to that veto has been removed from AB 1876.

**Follow the progress of our A priority bills, as well as all bills on our 2026 Legislative Agenda by accessing the [bill tracking report](#) which can be found at the top of the [Public Policy web page](#). This is a living document that will continue to be updated as the bills progress throughout the legislative session.**

# Did You Participate in Lobby Days? No Kings 3.0?

Send Us Your Pictures!

Thank you to all of our members who have (or will be) participating in Lobby Days 2026! AND a big thank you to all who went out to march for democracy and equity at No Kings 3.0 on Saturday, March 28, 2026.

If you have great photos that you would like to share from either Lobby Days or No Kings 3.0, please do! We ask that you upload them using the following submission forms:

- **Lobby Days 2026:** Click [HERE](#) to upload a photo
- **No Kings 3.0:** Click [HERE](#) to upload a photo

**We look forward to seeing you all in action!**

