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Public Policy News

A monthly dispatch from the AAUW California Public Policy Team

2024 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Governor signs AAUW legislation

August 31, 2024 was the final day for the Legislature to pass bills. The Governor had until September 30, 2024 to sign or veto the bills passed by the Legislature. **As of press time, 16 bills on our 2024 Legislative Agenda have been signed into law, including all three of our "A" priority bills:**

- AB 2843:Health Care Coverage: Rape and Sexual Assault
- AB 2099:Crimes: Reproductive Health Services
- AB 2326:Equity in Higher Education Act: Discrimination: Compliance

Thank YOU for all of your help responding to action alerts, participating in lobby days, and getting out the word about these bills--which are now laws in California! A full update on the 2024 Legislative Agenda will be featured in the November issue of Public Policy News.

PROJECT 2025 WEBINAR

October 22-Register now!

The California Online Branch will host a webinar presented by the Public Policy Committee entitled, "Project 2025 and How it would Impact AAUW Public Policy Priorities" on Tuesday October 22, 2024 at 7:00pm. The webinar will include an overview of where Project 2025 came from, what it is broadly attempting to do, and how it would impact education, Title IX, reproductive health, and gender equity. **You can register for the webinar [HERE](#).**

WHERE IS THAT?

Find All Things Public Policy

Key links to your public policy resources:

- [Google Workspace](#)
- [AAUW Policy Leaders Manual from National](#)
- [Branch liaisons](#)
- Contact us at publicpolicy@aauw-ca.org
- **Tell us about your branch public policy events** by filling out this [form](#).
- **Sign up for CA Legislative Action Alerts [HERE!](#)**

NEXT MEETING FOR BRANCH PUBLIC POLICY CHAIRS

Thursday October 10, 2024 at
3:00pm Pacific

**NOTE DIFFERENT TIME AND
ZOOM LINK!**

Click [HERE](#) for meeting
information.

Unless they fall on a
holiday, bimonthly Peer
Group Meetings will be
held on the first Thursday
at 3:00pm Pacific in Dec,
Feb, Apr, Jun

**SIGN UP FOR
ACTION ALERTS
[HERE.](#)**

*click
here!*

**[2024
Bill Tracker](#)**

Get Out The Vote (GOTV)

Resources & Strategies

The highest rate of voter turnout in a national election since 1900 was in 2020. This rate was 66%, or about two-thirds of the voting-eligible population. In every election cycle, it is important to make sure that we all know the mechanics of voting, as well as the issues that are at stake in the election--to exercise our own right to weigh the facts and cast our vote and to ensure that others are able to seamlessly do the same.

Knowing California-specific information about how to **register voters, check voter registration, direct voters to voting locations, answer questions about ballots, dispel misinformation, and have conversations across difference** are all part of being part of an impactful Get Out the Vote (GOTV) effort.



Voting Dates and Deadlines 2024



- October 7.** Vote-by-Mail (VBM) Ballots are sent to registered voters.
- October 8.** Ballot drop-off locations (official drop boxes) become available.
- October 12.** Check with your county elections office if you have checked that your voter registration details are correct but do not yet have a VBM ballot.
- October 21.** Most voter registration closes (but you can still register in-person on election day).
- October 26.** Vote Centers open for early in-person voting and VBM drop-off in select counties.
- October 29.*** Last day to request a replacement VBM ballot (if you make a mistake) in certain counties (e.g. LA). Check your county elections office.
- November 5.** Election Day! VBM ballots must be postmarked by today or dropped off at a Vote Center by 8pm.
- November 12.** VBM ballots must be received to be counted.

To help GOTV in 2024, you can brush up on your existing knowledge of voting mechanics in California, important issues, and GOTV outreach--and hopefully learn something new--by watching "Getting Out the Vote in a Polarized World." This 60-minute webinar was recorded on Monday, September 23, 2024. The webinar recording and the slides, which include a full index of resource links, can be accessed [HERE](#).

GOTV LINKS

Opt-In to extra GOTV action items until election on day [HERE](#).

Access 09/23/24 GOTV Webinar and Slides [HERE](#).

To get you started, we have included a helpful list of important dates for voting in California (image above).

As you plan your own GOTV efforts, please also watch for weekly emails from AAUW California that ask you to help GOTV by sharing information about the election with your friends, family, and peers, via word of mouth and social media. If you want to receive a **ADDITIONAL** GOTV messages each week until the election, please sign up [HERE](#).

Thank you and good luck getting out the vote in 2024!

Public Policy Priorities & the Election

Considering How Groups & Candidates Align with Our PPPs **Highlight: Student Loan Debt**

By Missy Maceyko, Co-Chair Public Policy, AAUW California

At the national and state levels, AAUW has been a leader in the fight for increased economic security for all women, becoming well known for putting out annual data on gender-based wage gaps. However, wage gaps are only one part of the much bigger picture of gender-based economic inequality. AAUW, following contemporary socio-economic research, conceptualizes economic insecurity as part of wealth gaps and debt cycles that are created by multiple factors, including the ballooning cost of higher education.

Education is critically important for social and economic mobility. In 2024, young college graduates still tend to make more money than their counterparts who do not have a college degree, and have higher earnings later in life. However, the value of higher education has become a more complicated calculus for many: as education costs have risen, overall income rates have remained stagnant and low interest borrowing and repayment options to cover these costs have, in many cases, decreased. Without intergenerational wealth, ongoing family support, or scholarship wins, many Americans must go into debt to obtain a higher education. Women are disproportionately impacted by these increasing costs. Women tend to make less money directly after graduation when compared with men. This, combined with additional factors, such as the tendency for women to be burdened with financial and emotional costs of household maintenance, like caregiving, makes any accrued student debt much harder for women to repay. **As such, women in the United States owe \$929 billion, or two-thirds of the nation's student debt.**

As part of the larger commitment to economic security for women, AAUW has been a leader in pushing for policies that meaningfully address massive increases in the cost of education and the student debt crisis. In California, reducing the cost of education and easing the financial burden of acquiring a degree remains central to AAUW California's Public Policy Priorities, where work to reduce the burden of student debt falls under three of our four Public Policy Priority Pillars.

Equal Access to Quality Public Education for All Students

Economic Security for All Women

Increased Representation of Women in Leadership Roles

The issue of student debt, as an issue of women's overall educational access, social mobility, and economic security, also looms large in the current election cycle. Addressing student debt issues in ways that align with AAUW's PPPs may include:

- student debt relief for borrowers;
- making investments in public education;
- expanding federal grant access;
- ensuring the continuation of the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program, which eliminates federal student loan debt after 10 years of work at a non-profit or government agency;
- maintaining Income Driven Repayment (IDR) plans, like SAVE, which take into account unique financial situations and eliminate interest-driven balance increases for borrowers who make on-time monthly payments.

Not addressing student debt issues at all or exacerbating these issues does not align with AAUW's PPPs. Actions taken that are not in alignment may include:

- widespread funding cuts for higher education;
- cutting loan forgiveness programs or slowing their functionality;
- eliminating the Department of Education.

While many candidates have tried to distance themselves from Project 2025, their openly stated and proposed policies may still be in alignment with the 900-page planning document's positions on the topic of women's economic security via higher education access and debt relief: Project 2025 calls for changing, rescinding, or repealing federal student loan forgiveness plans, including PSLF and debt relief through IDR.



As you prepare to vote, be sure to ask: what do the candidates who you are considering stand for? Do your own assessment by comparing candidates' public statements, policy positions, and voting history against AAUW California's Public Policy Priorities.

ADDITIONAL ELECTION RESOURCES

From AAUW National

AAUW National has provided some excellent [Election Resources](#) including Voter Issue Guides, trainings, how-to's, and webinars. There are some informative webinars under the Resources tab including "How to Engage with Elected Officials" and "Title IX & Transgender Student Rights." There are also a number of recorded webinars related to voting under the "Trainings" tab.

Register [HERE](#) for the upcoming webinar: **Issues in the Home Stretch and Voter Protection (October 16)**

Holding an event? Request AAUW stickers, pins, signs and more [HERE](#)



Be On The Lookout!



As our election coverage has shown, our Public Policy Priorities (PPPs) are VERY important for shaping how we take positions and advance legislation. Be on the lookout in November for our biannual survey through which YOU tell US your thoughts on our current PPPs--and make suggestions for additions and changes.

MEET THE PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE

PP Committee Profiles

Each AAUW California branch has a specific liaison on the Public Policy Committee. **To find your liaison [CLICK HERE](#).**

You can get to know everyone a bit better by checking out their individual profiles [HERE](#). This year we (thankfully!) have a very large committee, so 3-4 profiles will be featured in each upcoming issues of PP News.



[CLICK HERE](#) TO ACCESS THE CALIFORNIA STATE PUBLIC POLICY WEBSITE

ASHA BAJAJ

She/Her/Hers

Branch: Danville-Alamo-Walnut Creek

Membership in AAUW: 31 years

Member of AAUW California

State Public Policy Committee: 4 years

What do you find most important about Public Policy and Public Policy work?

"Staying abreast of the issues, legal advocacy work, and being a part of the solution."



NANCY BREMEAU

She/Her/Hers

Branch: Silicon Valley

Membership in AAUW: 5 years

Member of AAUW California

State Public Policy Committee: first year

What do you find most important about Public Policy and Public Policy work?

"What I love about AAUW is that it centers the rights and well-being of women and girls which is a lifelong passion of mine. I am particularly interested in advocating for policies that support women and girls at the state and national level."



ERICA DIAS

She/Her/Hers

Branch: California Online

Membership in AAUW: 2 years

Member of AAUW California

State Public Policy Committee: first year

What do you find most important about Public Policy and Public Policy work?

"As an equity researcher, I have studied the unrivaled power of engaged voters and committed activists. We can all do something to advance the mission of AAUW. The Public Policy Committee's efforts will positively impact future generations. Here's to all those who came before us, all those in the fight, and to a brighter, more equitable, and accessible future for everyone."

