



Public Policy News

A monthly dispatch from the AAUW California Public Policy Team

PRESIDENT BIDEN AFFIRMS ERA AS THE 28TH AMENDMENT

AAUW has [issued a statement about ERA](#), which we want to share with you here: “AAUW applauds President Joe Biden’s historic affirmation of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) as the 28th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. While there will be challenges ahead, AAUW remains steadfast in our fight to ensure full recognition of equality that cannot be undermined on account of sex.”

LOBBY DAYS 2025

Registration Deadline February 21, 2025

We encourage all members to participate in Lobby Days 2025, an important act of advocacy to promote our legislative priorities. Meetings will be held in person at the Capitol on Tuesday, April 8th, and virtually via Zoom on Wednesday, April 9th. For more information about the event, see the article [HERE](#).

If you would like to participate, please complete **BOTH** of the following steps:

- **Step 1** - Register for the Lobby Days event [HERE](#).
- **Step 2** - Register for the mandatory training which will be held on March 31st, 7-8pm Pacific. Register for the training webinar [HERE](#).

SCHOOL BOARD PROJECT

Entering a New Phase in 2025

The School Board Project is now ready to begin the next phase, which will entail monitoring school boards for compliance to California law. Please take a moment to complete the survey which will arrive in your inbox on February 3rd to help us get a better picture of where we are following the recent elections, and where we need to focus to provide the best tools to help our branches engage at the local level.

IF YOU MISSED IT...



“2024 Revisions to Title IX: How they Impact AAUW Values and Public Policy Priorities” with Kathi Harper, chair of the School Board Project. Find the recording [HERE](#).

“Reproductive Rights: Where Do We Go From Here?” with [Emily Bazelon](#), noted staff writer for the New York Times Magazine. Find the recording [HERE](#).

BRANCH PUBLIC POLICY CHAIRS’ MEETING

NEXT MEETING

Thursday February 6, 2025 at 3:00pm Pacific



ZOOM LINK [HERE](#)



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 Feb, Apr, Jun

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

WHERE IS THAT?



Key links to your public policy resources:

- [Google Workspace](#)
- [Branch liaisons](#)
- Contact us at publicpolicy@aauw-ca.org
- Tell us about your branch public policy events by filling out this [form](#).

Project 2025 is Becoming Reality

Take Action to Fight Back!



As Co-Directors Amy Hom and Missy Maceyko outlined in a [webinar](#) in October 2024, the objectives of Project 2025 directly counter the Public Policy Priorities of AAUW California. **With federal policy pronouncements and changes taking place at a head spinning pace** since January 20, 2025, it is clear that there is a concerted effort by a number of coalitions in the federal government to make Project 2025 become reality. For example:

- The Executive Order declaring that there are “only two genders, male and female”.
- The Executive Order eliminating federal funds for schools that recognize transgender identities or teach about structural racism, white privilege, and unconscious bias.
- The Executive Order directing federal agencies to look for ways to expand access to private school vouchers.
- The Executive Order rescinding a dozen Biden-era executive actions supporting racial equity and combating discrimination against gay and transgender people.
- The Office of Management and Budget order freezing all federal financial assistance (since rescinded but with a standing order for agencies to restrict DEI programming and “woke gender ideology”).
- The Executive Order withdrawing the United States from the 2015 Paris agreement which seeks to avoid the worst impacts of the climate crisis.

While this may seem overwhelming, note that there are already individuals and coalitions who are pushing back in a number of ways, from [direct refusal to comply](#), to [spamming federal surveillance accounts](#), to direct [legal challenges](#).



AAUW California is building out our own action-items database, which will go live for you this spring. **In the interim, we will provide a short list and ask you to take action by choosing one self-focused, one other-focused, and one political-focused item from the list below.**



Self-Focused: Education

- rewatch the AAUW Project 2025 [webinar](#) from the fall, as needed, to get a sense of what Project 2025 is/does and/or read the [document](#) itself.
- read the articles linked above to better understand how some individuals and organizations are working to fight back.



Other-Focused: Education & Connection

- whatever you take away from your homework in self-education--be sure to tell one friend about what you learned. You can do this over lunch.



Politically-Focused: Outreach to Senators

- sign the [petition](#) opposing the confirmation of Linda McMahon. Text “SIGN PTGHEX” to 50409.
- reach out to potential swing Senators from outside of CA to voice your opposition to confirmation/s:

Lisa Murkowski, Alaska. 202-224-6665. Contact [form](#)
Susan Collins, Maine. 202-224-2523. Contact [form](#)
Thom Tillis, North Carolina. 202-224-6342. Contact [form](#)
Rand Paul, Kentucky. 202-224-4343. Contact [form](#)
Mitch McConnell, Kentucky. 202-224-2541. Contact [form](#)
John Curtis, Utah. 202-224-5251. Contact [form](#)
Bill Cassidy, Louisiana. 202-224-5824. Contact [form](#)
Joni Ernst, Iowa. 202-224-3254. Contact [form](#)
Chuck Grassley, Iowa 202-224-3744. Contact [form](#)

AAUW Public Policy Priorities

Changes for 2025-2027

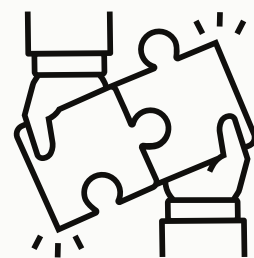
As most of you know, AAUW California is currently undergoing the biennial review and update of our Public Policy Priorities (PPPs). The CA Public Policy committee is working together to consider all of your feedback and, based on this, will release proposed updates to members for a vote this spring. Your input, and this process, is important as these Priorities shape the actions we take as an organization--as we've indicated in the previous pages.

The same is true of AAUW National, who is also in the process of updating their Public Policy Priorities (PPPs) for 2025-2027.

Proposed changes to AAUW National's PPPs were shared with membership in early January, 2025, along with an invitation for all members to review and comment. Over the course of the last month, several members who have reviewed these proposed changes, alongside AAUW National's other public statements and strategy documents, have expressed concern that AAUW National appears to be narrowing its focus to higher education, and in doing so, moving away from other priority areas.

We want to address this concern and provide some insight into AAUW National's overall strategy, as reported. **With all of the different issue-areas now under attack, AAUW National has to conserve its resources. As part of building wider coalitions with other like-minded organizations, they have made the decision to put their focus on education, where they have the most expertise and the best opportunity to make an impact.**

This does not mean that AAUW National is abandoning its commitment to other areas, like social justice. Instead, they are making the strategic decision to rely heavily on coalition partners who are leaders in these other areas. By working in coalition, different organizations can lead in the areas where they have more expertise, with the rest of the coalition adding their collective influence. AAUW National's focus on higher education is simply direction given to the Public Policy staff as to where to invest the majority of their time and resources.



Podcast: Is DEI Illegal?

Navigating actions to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion in 2025

In advocating for gender equity and social justice through policy and legislation, there is a direct link between public policy work and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) work at AAUW California. Co-Director Missy Maceyko has recorded a recent podcast episode on how to understand DEI work in light of the federal attack on DEI. The podcast also touches on programs and actions in which you can and should continue to engage in your organizations--those that historically overlap with DEI work, but that are not always coded as DEI, such as mentorship programs and/or training in how to speak across difference. These kinds of programs and actions can help keep your organizations healthy and functional in an already diverse world while also promoting pluralism.



Click [HERE](#) to access on YouTube

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS THE AAUW CA PUBLIC POLICY WEBSITE](#)

(excerpt from) We Didn't Start the Fire

The LA Fires are a tragedy. DEI is the solution, not the problem.

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



It is January 2025. Populous, beloved, and well-known neighborhoods in Los Angeles, one of the biggest metropolitan areas in the world, are on fire. For days, residents have been evacuating, firefighters have been going without sleep, and homes and iconic landmarks have been burning. Even those that are not in immediate danger are breathing in toxic air that can create diseases for generations. It seems like everyone in the city is grieving something or someone. And yet, as the disaster unfolds, people in LA are engaging in a massive outpouring of collective mutual aid and community support for the people and animals who are displaced and suffering.

On the other hand, as Angelinos are left to cope with displacement, property damage, and loss, leading figures in national politics have seized the moment, not to offer support, but to immediately go on the attack. They are placing blame on who they felt was the most likely culprit for these horrific fires and their aftermath: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI).

These accusations about DEI would be laughable were they not so problematic. Blaming DEI shows a lack of understanding of what DEI is and does while also simplifying a large and complex problem related to a multitude of factors such as weather, infrastructure, and climate change. DEI experts say that diversity is valuable for many reasons—for addressing historical marginalization, yes, but also for increasing our problem-solving capacity and leading to innovation. Both inside and outside of the business world, diversity is associated with higher engagement, reduced turnover, and improved, and more objective, decision-making and problem-solving. Diversity of thought in inclusive teams has been found to lead to more innovation and better, higher-impact ideas. Indeed, as University of Michigan professor of Complexity, Social Science, and Management, Scott Brown notes, to solve complex problems in the 21st century, like climate change, we need diverse teams who can communicate across difference: “groups of experts, at least as we’re accustomed to thinking about them, are going to have a hard time competing with talented teams of people with relevant diverse perspectives.”

We need to truly understand the problems associated with these fires in order to prevent future loss. Rather than vilifying DEI, we need to acknowledge that DEI is one of the best tools that we have to solve such problems. We need to come together to leverage a diversity of experiences and perspectives.

In the case of the LA fires, DEI has also been singled out as the primary culprit due to the assumption that “DEI hiring” impacts competent leadership. Certain leaders have been targeted for what was labeled as inadequate planning, resourcing, and response, such as Mayor Karen Bass and Fire Chief Kristin Crowley. These leaders have not only been labeled as incompetent, but also as “DEI hires.” The labeling of these leaders as “DEI hires” is likely because they are a woman of color and a woman who is a member of the LGBTQIA+ community, respectively. They are holding positions that have historically been held by, and associated with, cisgender and heterosexual (cis-het) white men. Given the leadership positions that they hold, alongside their gender, sexuality, and race, any potential fallibility in their decision-making is not only labeled as incompetence, but is also tacitly attributed to their “DEI” status.

As in this case, any association of DEI with hiring is assumed to be the antithesis of meritocracy. In other words, DEI considerations in hiring are assumed to unfairly divert jobs and benefits to “minority” candidates, who are positioned as an undeserving majority that get an opportunity because of who they are instead of being considered for their skill sets, experiences, and past accomplishments. **This narrative about “DEI” and hiring clearly overlooks the fact that women like Mayor Karen Bass and Fire Chief Kristin Crowley are hired based on merit, regardless of their identity, even as they often have to overcome additional hurdles to enter into historically masculine fields and gain the qualifications and experiences to succeed.**

Accusations about the harms of DEI proliferate in the current political environment, rife with threats of increased regulation and retribution. It is necessary to scrutinize the policy and planning of all leaders and decision-makers in LA in order to fully answer questions about fire mitigation and response. However, to pin the blame on DEI is to tacitly pin the blame on only those decision makers who are not cis-het white men and/or on those who are supportive of the kind of work that is needed to engage a range of perspectives.

Over the last few years, and accelerating after January 20, 2025, state and federal level policy changes and pronouncements in the United States have not only (seemingly) forced DEI from federally funded programs, but also created a chilling effect, leading some large corporations and public universities to (seemingly) pull back from DEI initiatives. However, given the well-known benefits of business-integrated DEI strategies in a globalized economy, DEI work will—and must—continue in order to solve big problems.



[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS A TEXT-BASED COPY OF THE NL ARTICLE](#)

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS THE FULL ARTICLE AT WILLING OBSERVERS.COM](#)