



Public Policy News

A monthly dispatch from the AAUW California Public Policy Team

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

Thank you for all you do

As we close out what has been a very challenging year, we extend our heartfelt appreciation for your support, your dedication, and the spirit of community you bring to our work.

Standing together to defend democracy, advance gender equity for women and girls, and champion social justice for all is no small task - and yet you show up, with courage and conviction. Your energy and engagement were on full display last month as we turned out in force for No Kings Day, reminding our communities - and ourselves - what collective power looks like. Through our individual and collective action as AAUW members, we demonstrate the continued strength of our organization to speak truth to power and impact necessary change in the world.

Thank you for all you do, and for the passion you bring to AAUW's mission. Wishing you peace, joy, and renewed strength this holiday season. We look forward to continuing this important work with you in the year ahead.

Warmest Holiday Wishes,

Amy and Missy

Upcoming Events

Mark Your Calendars!



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. **Dec 3, 2025 4:00-5:00pm**. Register [HERE](#)

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 1:00-2:00pm**. Register [HERE](#)

AAUW California School Board Project presents a Half Day Symposium: Defending the Frontline of Democracy - **Saturday Jan 31, 2026 9:00am-12:30pm** via Zoom. Register [HERE](#).

If you missed it...
AAUW California Webinar - Harnessing the Power of AI. See the recording and presentation [HERE](#).

BRANCH PUBLIC POLICY CHAIRS' MEETING

NEXT PEER GROUP MEETING

Friday Dec 5, 2025

at 1:30pm Pacific

ZOOM LINK [HERE](#)



Click [HERE](#) for meeting information.



Peer Group Meetings will be bi-monthly on Fridays at 1:30pm.

All are welcome!

2025-2026 Meetings:

- Fri Dec 5 at 1:30pm
- Fri Feb 6 at 1:30pm
- Fri Apr 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@aauw-ca.org.
- Tell us about your branch public policy events by filling out this [form](#).

click here!

[2025 Bill Tracker](#)

California Passes Prop 50

Thank you for your advocacy!



Action
Creates
Change

Thank you for everything you did to Get Out the Vote and help our communities understand the importance of Proposition 50 for all Californians. **Voters overwhelmingly approved the measure**, giving the state the ability to temporarily redraw its congressional map in response to the problematic redistricting undertaken by Texas. Californians made it clear that they want to safeguard fair representation and uphold democratic norms. And the collective efforts of organizations like AAUW California - alongside many others - made a real difference, demonstrating the power that we have when we work together.

Department of Education Dismantled

What AAUW has done - and what's next

Last month the Trump administration took a major new step to dismantle the U.S. Department of Education (ED). After deep staff cuts, ED announced six “partnerships” on November 18 that shift the day-to-day work of key education programs to other federal agencies, despite Congress creating ED to centralize federal education expertise and protect students’ civil rights. AAUW released a statement underscoring what’s at stake & rejecting the idea that education should be reduced to workforce development alone. Here’s a quick summary of the announcement.

What AAUW has done.

- **Pushed Lawmakers to Act.** AAUW has joined in a multi-organization statement to Congress calling on lawmakers to reclaim their authority and block this unprecedented transfer of ED responsibilities. Read it here.
- **Joined Actions of Disability Rights Coalitions.** Joined shared disability rights principles affirming that ED must remain an independent, fully staffed and funded agency to oversee the federal education rights of children and youth with disabilities. IDEA and Section 504 guarantee students with disabilities a free, appropriate public education and protection from discrimination. Weakening ED’s capacity to enforce these laws would put those rights – and the resources schools need to uphold them – at risk. Read the principles here.

Why this matters.

- **Ensuring Civil Rights Protections in Education.** ED was created by Congress to ensure equal educational opportunity and enforce civil-rights laws in education. Scattering expertise across agencies not centered on education makes those statutory responsibilities harder to meet and accountability harder to track.
- **Preserving the Purpose of Education.** When federal leaders frame education as a “talent pipeline,” they focus on a kind of economic rationality that ignores its broader purpose of preparing people to lead, participate in democracy, and build economically secure lives. That broad purpose is especially vital for women and girls, students of color, LGBTQ+ students, students with disabilities, Native students, immigrants, and student parents.

What you can do.

- **Take Action in December.** See page 3 of this newsletter for self-focused, other-focused, and politically-focused actions you can take to combat the assault on Higher Education.
- **Keep Up To Date with Developments via AAUW.** Join 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. Dec 3, 2025 4:00-5:00pm. Register HERE

CLICK HERE TO ACCESS THE AAUW CA PUBLIC POLICY WEBSITE

Three Steps to Take Action in December

Focus: The Assault on Higher Education



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 COMBATTING THE ASSAULT ON HIGHER EDUCATION.

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 (soon-to-be website for easier navigation).

Take Action: Combatting the Assault on Higher Education

STEP 1: Self-Focused: Education



- 1
- Learn about the Trump Administration's "Compact for Academic Excellence in Higher Education" which would offer preferential funding to universities if they adopt policy changes such as dismantling DEI and restricting campus governing and speech. See [how universities have been responding](#), and read AAUW's [press release](#) opposing the compact.
- Read the [AAUW letter](#) urging Congress to support student parents by preserving the Child Care Access Means Parents in Schools (CCAMPIS) program. The CCAMPIS program helps student parents by funding campus-based child care centers.
- Read the [summary from AAUW National](#) on the dismantling of the Department of Education - what is happening, and why it matters.

STEP 2: Other-Focused: Education & Connection



- 2
- Tell at least TWO other people what you have learned about the negative impacts of the Trump Administration's "Compact for Academic Excellence in Higher Education".
- Tell at least TWO other people what you learned about the negative impacts of the Trump Administration's dismantling of the Department of Education.
- Tell at least TWO other people about the importance of the CCAMPIS program to support student parents.
- Get a booster shot of hope: meet with friends for a watch party of AAUW National's 10/29/25 webinar, "[Defending Equity: Standing Strong Against Attacks on Equity in Education](#)," It will inspire you.

STEP 3: Politically-Focused



- 3
- Tell Congress to ask the Department of Education to open the CCAMPIS application so parenting students can stay in school. Click [here](#) to access AAUW's Two-Minute Activist page, then click on "Dept. of Ed.: Remove Barriers for Student Parents".
- Urge Congress to block efforts to dismantle the Department of Education's ability to do its job - advancing gender and racial equity in every classroom and protecting students' rights. Click [here](#) to access AAUW's Two-Minute Activist page, then click on "Congress: Ensure the Dept. of Ed. Can Serve Our Students".

For extra learning and outreach ideas to combat the assault on Higher Ed this month, see our ["Action Extras."](#)

No Kings Day

AAUW shows up in force



In October, AAUW encouraged members to turn out to nationwide No Kings Day protests to “...show the power of people working together for education, economic opportunity, civil rights, and a healthy democracy.” AAUW members responded, joining with neighbors, friends, and family members, as well as with partner organizations, to turn out in force.

This kind of collective action is important. Protests can be inspiring, creating moments of shared joy, empathy, and action that make us feel as if we are members of a wider unified group. These moments of coming-together can be particularly important at times when we may feel isolated, disempowered, or fractured.



In the United States, protests also play a useful role in creating and executing strategies for social and political change. As the Center for American Progress notes, “...peaceful protests by just 3.5 percent of a nation’s population at a peak moment can make it extremely difficult for the government to ignore peoples’ demands.”



AAUW California Public Policy Committee Announces School Board Project Symposium

By Kathi Harper, Chair AAUW California Public Policy School Board Project



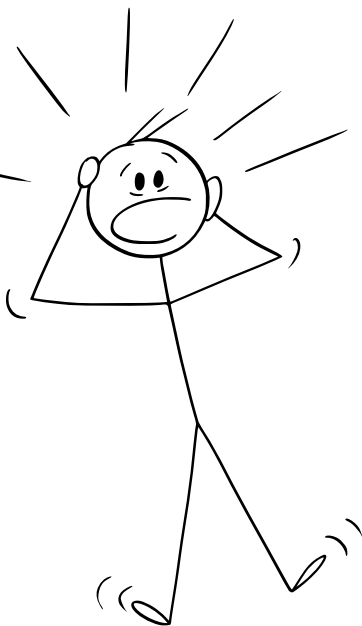
In *The Once and Future King*, T.H. White wrote: “[Y]ou may see the world about you devastated by evil lunatics, or know your honour trampled in the sewers of baser minds. There is only one thing for it then – to learn... That is the only thing which the mind can never exhaust, never alienate, never be tortured by, never fear or distrust, and never dream of regretting. Learning is the only thing for you.”

In 1881, a small group of female college graduates demonstrated that they understood the importance of learning to women’s ability to advance in the world, when they banded together in what would become the American Association of University Women to encourage more women to pursue higher education.

Almost one hundred years later, Congress demonstrated that they understood the importance of equal access to learning when they added Title IX to the U.S. Education Codes in 1972, prohibiting discrimination in educational opportunities on the basis of sex; and again when they established the U.S. Department of Education on May 4, 1980, with a mission to strengthen the Federal commitment to assuring access to equal educational opportunity for every individual.

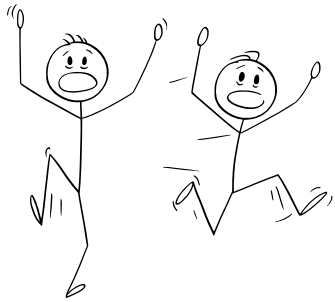
Now, fifty-five years later, it does indeed seem the world is being “devastated by lunatics.” In 2016 Title IX protections against sexual harassment were eviscerated in the first Trump administration. Attempts by the new administration in 2020 to reverse those changes, and to provide additional protections for our LGBTQ+ and pregnant students were thrown out by a Federal court. In 2022, Florida passed the Stop WOKE Act restricting classroom discussions of race, gender and sexual orientation and banned 2300 books in just the 2024-25 school year alone followed by 23 other states. This spawned the “Moms for Liberty” movement, whose goal is to install school board members across the United States whose values include banning books, censoring curriculum and enacting policies harmful to our LGBTQ+ students.

And it gets worse. In his inaugural address in January 2025, the President declared “As of today, it will henceforth be the official policy of the United States government that there are only two genders: male and female.” In February he sent a “Dear Colleague” letter to all school districts making federal funding contingent on eliminating race-based considerations from all policy decisions. To date eight universities have capitulated to the current administration’s lawsuits or threats to withhold grants by agreeing to curtail or eliminate DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion) programs and policies under an Alice-in-Wonderland definition of discrimination. And the latest blow: in late November of 2025, the Trump administration took a major new step to dismantle the U.S. Department of Education (ED). After deep staff cuts, ED announced six “partnerships” on November 18 that shift the day-to-day work of key education programs to other federal agencies, despite Congress creating ED to centralize federal education expertise and protect students’ civil rights.



AAUW California Public Policy Committee Announces School Board Project Symposium

By Kathi Harper, Chair AAUW California Public Policy School Board Project



Is your hair on fire yet?! I know ours (AAUW California Public Policy Committee) is. That's why the School Board Project is more important, more relevant, and more urgent than ever. We are doing everything we can to empower you, our members, to make a difference at the grass roots level to fight to save the value of learning in your local school districts, by speaking up for our values at school board meetings and supporting school board candidates who share those values.

If you're ready to fight back, please join us for a half day of our own learning, on Saturday, January 31, 2026, 9:00 am to 12:30 pm PT, for our symposium "AAUW School Board Project: Defending the Frontline of Democracy." In just 3 1/2 short hours, you will 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 whose values reflect AAUW California's Public Policy Priorities

Don't just be on fire, be fired-up! Join us for a day of learning, by registering [HERE](#).



LEARNING IS THE ONLY THING FOR YOU!

This article is the the fourth and final installment in a series focused on the AAUW California School Board Project. If you missed them, check out the previous installments which were published in the September, October, and November issues of Public Policy News (find archived issues [HERE](#)):

- "Understand the Urgency of Branch Participation in the School Board Project" (September)
- "School Boards - The Overlooked Frontline of Democracy" (October)
- "Supporting Public Education: Community-Based Coalitions" (November)