

2009–11 AAUW Public Policy Program

The public policy program underscores AAUW's mission of advancing equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, and research and speaks to women's needs, aspirations, and concerns across the life span. The work of AAUW builds upon more than 125 years of responsible public participation, and the following principles provide a basis for AAUW members' actions at the local, state, national, and international levels. Implicit in each of our principles is support for government agencies administering programs, including adequate appropriations, effective and accountable administration, and provision for citizen participation. We advocate public discussion to ensure enlightened decisions on these principles. We work to increase the number of underrepresented populations, including women, in policy- and other decision-making positions. AAUW is committed to working in partnership with diverse allies and coalitions to break through educational and economic barriers for women and girls.

Public Policy Principles for Action

Basic to all of AAUW's public policy efforts is the understanding that true equity requires a balance between the rights of the individual and the needs of the community. AAUW opposes all forms of discrimination and supports constitutional protection for the civil rights of all individuals.

AAUW believes that quality public education is the foundation of a democratic society. We advocate equitable and harassment-free climates, academic freedom, civic education, protection from censorship, bias-free education, and responsible funding for all levels of education, including early childhood education. We advocate increased access to higher education, especially for women in poverty. We promote equitable efforts to close the persistent achievement gap that disproportionately affects low-income children and students from minority communities.

AAUW promotes the economic, social, and physical well-being of all persons. Essential to that well-being are an economy that provides equitable employment opportunities, a livable wage, reduction of poverty, quality affordable dependent care, paid family and medical leave, decent and affordable housing, quality affordable health care; and a clean and healthful environment. We support a Social Security system that provides inflation-protected, guaranteed lifetime benefits with a progressive benefit formula, spousal and widow benefits, and disability and survivor benefits.

AAUW believes in the right to privacy, freedom from violence, and choice in the determination of one's reproductive life. We firmly believe in the separation of church and state. We support a fair, balanced, and independent judiciary. We support public budgets that balance individual rights and responsibility to the community.

AAUW supports affirmative action to improve racial, ethnic, and gender diversity and affirms our commitment to passage and ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. We support meaningful campaign finance reform and voter education efforts that will promote equitable political participation and representation. AAUW values and is committed to the arts and humanities, which develop and enhance our pluralistic cultural heritage.

AAUW believes that global interdependence requires national and international policies that promote peace, justice, human rights, sustainable development, and mutual security for all people. We support a strengthened United Nations and its affiliated agencies. We advocate implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action from the 4th World Conference on Women and subsequent declarations. We affirm our commitment to the U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). We support international family planning programs that are consistent with AAUW policy.

Biennial Action Priorities

Biennial priorities for federal action are chosen according to the criteria of viability, critical need, strong member support, and potential for distinctive AAUW contribution or leadership.

To support a strong system of public education that promotes gender fairness, equity, and diversity, AAUW advocates

- Adequate and equitable funding for quality public education for all students
- Opposition to the use of public funds for nonpublic elementary and secondary education
- Protection of programs that meet the needs of girls and women in elementary, secondary, and post-secondary education, including vigorous enforcement of Title IX and all other civil rights laws pertaining to education
- Increased support for and access to higher education for women and disadvantaged populations
- Increased support for programs that break through barriers for women and girls in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields

To achieve economic self-sufficiency for all women, AAUW advocates

- Pay equity and fairness in compensation
- Equitable access and advancement in employment, including vigorous enforcement of employment antidiscrimination statutes
- Greater availability of and access to benefits and policies that promote work-life balance
- Programs that provide women with education, training, and support for success in the workforce, including nontraditional occupations and women's entrepreneurship
- Strengthening programs, including welfare and vocational education, to improve postsecondary education access, career development, and earning potential
- Strengthening retirement benefits and programs, including pension improvements and protecting Social Security from privatization

To guarantee equality, individual rights, and social justice for a diverse society, AAUW advocates

- Vigorous protection of and full access to civil and constitutional rights
- Choice in the determination of one's reproductive life
- Freedom from violence and fear of violence in homes, schools, workplaces, and communities
- Increased access to quality, affordable health care and family planning services, including expansion of patients' rights
- Support for U.N. programs that address human rights and women's and girls' concerns
- Freedom in definition of family and guarantee of civil rights in all family structures