

Public Policy  
April 2023  
AAUW CHANGES THE CONVERSATION AND CREATES ACTION

The above statement says it all. This is what AAUW is about—changing the prevailing conversations and attitudes about women and girls by advocating for legislation and providing educational opportunities and research that bring about actions resulting in gender equity and improved welfare of women and girls. Social Justice is at the core of what AAUW does everyday, and Public Policy’s priorities and legal advocacy play a significant part in helping achieve Social Justice .

California AAUW Public Policy establishes policy directives to guide our members, inform our legislative priorities, and serve our mission. Every two years the directives are re-assessed to determine if updates need to be made in light of an ever-changing cultural and legislative landscape. Members are invited and encouraged to make suggestions through a statewide survey, which was conducted in the fall of 2022.. The AAUW California Public Policy Committee has reviewed all submitted comments from 466 members and decided on a number of changes for the next two-year period of July 2023 through June 2025. The proposed changes were presented to and adopted by the AAUW California Board of Directors and will be put to a vote by the membership April 22-May 13, 2023 as required by our bylaws.

Link to suggested new priorities:

<https://www.aauw-ca.org/2023-proposed-public-policy-priorities/>

**AAUW California State Public Policy Committee Sets 2023-24 Legislative Agenda**

by Kathi Harper, State Public Policy Chair

The State Public Policy Committee, in conjunction with our Public Policy Advocate Kathy Von Osten (KVO), has completed their selection of the 30 bills that the committee and KVO will be working on this year. This year our bills fall into the following categories from the 3 pillars of our Public Policy Priorities:

- 8 “Economic Security” bills
- 11 “Public Education” bills
- 21 “Social Justice” bills
  - 8 “reproductive justice”
  - 5 “healthcare”
  - 5 “freedom from violence” including sex exploitation, DV, stalking
  - 1 “gender-identity protection”
  - 2 “voting rights”

The committee then selected our top 3 priority bills, including at least 1 bill that we will co-sponsor (“A” bills). KVO will spend most of her time working on these bills, including working with the authors’ offices, attending committing hearings, and writing letters of support. These are also the 3 bills members will advocate for in their Lobby Days visits. We then selected 3 next-level bills (“B” bills), which are important but not as resource intensive. The remaining 24 bills will be handled as “C” level bills. Here is a look at our top 3 bills:

**AB1394** – This is our co-sponsored bill. It would allow victims of child sexual exploitation and trafficking to sue a social media platform for between \$1 million and \$5 million if the victim can prove the platform design knowingly, recklessly or negligently facilitated the use of code words for sexual predators to describe the type of child and the type of sexual activity that resulted in the act of exploitation.

**SB287** - Would prohibit a social media platform from using a design, algorithm, or feature that the platform knows, or should know, causes child users to: purchase fentanyl; inflict harm on themselves or others; develop an eating disorder or engage in dangerous dieting; purposely take their own lives; and/or experience addiction to the social media platform. A victim of any of these consequences can sue the platform for up to \$250,000 for each violation.

**AB549** - Requires all state agencies to conduct an evaluation of all their departments to ensure the state does not discriminate against women, and report their findings every 2 years

Over 140 members committed to this year's Lobby Days during which our members would speak to available legislators or their staff person, explaining AAUW's concern and commitment to these three bills. I was a first-timer this year and worked with my lead team member to develop our presentation. We were provided with training and written scripts to help us prepare our remarks that stressed AAUW's mission in relation to these the bills. The day began with a Zoom visit from Assembly Member, Buffy Wicks. As the author of AB1394, she welcomed AAUW as a cosponsor of her bill. She is a mother of two young children and thoroughly understands the concerns presented by social medias' platforms. Her call to action was just what we needed for our day of LOBBYING.