

Public Policy  
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“The world as we have created it is a process of our thinking. It cannot be changed without changing our thinking.” Albert Einstein.

You’ve read this quote before—right here in the July 2022 Public Policy article. We proudly spotlighted AAUW’s advocacy for issues aimed at changing people’s thinking about Economic Security, Equal Access to Quality Public Education for all Students, and Social and Racial Justice for All Members of Society. Of course we also lamented the seemingly intractable ability of our politicians to come to consensus on some of the issues that would promote these priorities and the long, laborious process, not yet completed in gaining social and racial justice for all. Let’s look at the history of women’s right to vote.

Deborah White, a Distinguished Professor of History and Women’s Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Rutgers University, speaks to this issue. “The Nineteenth Amendment (1920) granted black and white women the vote, but they traveled radically different paths to suffrage. . .Indeed, while both groups had to fight for the vote, black women had to struggle against black and white men, and white women. We should remember also that while the Nineteenth Amendment granted the vote to all women, black women in southern states had the vote stripped from them. This means that while we celebrate the Nineteenth Amendment we should also celebrate the 1965 Voting Rights Act that made the amendment a reality for millions of black women, and realize too that when the Supreme Court gutted the key part of this act in 2013, black women’s right to the vote was again put in jeopardy. . .While all women got the vote in 1920, not all women were immediately allowed to vote, not all used the vote the same way, and not all used it to further the interests of all women.”

<https://sas.rutgers.1965-voting-rights-act-made-voting-a-reality-for-black-women>

This is February, Black History Month; let’s celebrate some of the black women who helped forge the path to justice and equality that AAUW advocates for today.

**Sojourner Truth**, a former slave advocated for abolition, temperance, and civil and women’s rights.

**Rosa Parks and Claudette Colvin** (age 15) helped initiate the Civil Rights movement. Their refusal to give up their seats to white men on Alabama buses, resulted in the ruling that bus segregation was unconstitutional.

**Nannie Helen Burroughs** wrote and spoke about the need for Black and white women to cooperate to achieve the right to vote.

**Ida B. Wells** founded the Alpha Suffrage Club of Chicago in 1913, the nation's first Black women's club focused specifically on suffrage.

**Nannie Helen Burroughs** was an educator, suffragist, and civil rights activist. She founded the National Training School for Women and Girls. She also helped mentor civil rights leaders such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

**Katherine Johnson**, a brilliant mathematician, was one of three Black students to integrate West Virginia’s graduate schools. Her greatest contribution was to space exploration through her calculations synching Apollo’s Lunar Module with the lunar-orbiting Module. (*Hidden Figures*)She also worked on the Space Shuttle.

**Madam C.J. Walker** was considered the wealthiest African-American businesswoman in America (1911-1919), by developing and marketing a line of cosmetics and hair care products for Black women. She hired 40,000 “ambassadors” to sell her products.

**Shirley Chisholm** was the first Black woman elected to Congress in 1968. She served as a representative from New York for 14 years, was the first Black candidate to run for president in the 1972 race, and founded the Congressional Black Caucus in 1971 and the Congressional Women’s Caucus in 1977.

**Mae Jemison** became the first Black woman to fly to space on the space shuttle Endeavour. She was also the first Black woman admitted to the astronaut training program, in 1987.

**Toni Morrison** released her novel *Beloved* in 1987, winner of the Pulitzer Prize, based on the true story of an African American enslaved woman. In 1993, Morrison became the first Black woman to win the Nobel Prize in Literature.

**Oprah Winfrey**, born into poverty in rural Mississippi to a single teenage mother, molested as a child and pregnant at 14, became the most influential woman in the world by many accounts. An American talk show host, television producer, actress, author, and philanthropist, she was the richest African-American of the 20th century and was once the world’s only black billionaire.

AAUW continued to support a change in people’s thinking?

- AAUW supported the introduction of the Students’ Access to Freedom and Educational Rights (SAFER) Act on December 1. We look forward to its reintroduction in the 118th Congress. The [bill](#) would protect students’ right to educations free from discrimination, harassment and violence.
- AAUW joined the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and 26 organizations on a [comment](#) urging the Department of Education to update the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act Stronger Connections FAQs [guidance](#). We asked that the guidance more directly support safe, healthy and inclusive learning environments for all students.

“Let’s Talk DEI.” We prepared an agenda that identified the goals of the meeting, organized breakout rooms to provide you an opportunity to get to know one another, and hoped your group of DEI branch coordinators/ directors would become collaborators around issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

- January – Lobby Days Opportunity for all members to sign up to help advocate for our priority bills. Sign up to participate and register for training [HERE](#). Deadline is January 18th.
- February – [Black History Month](#).
- March – Busy Month!
  - Women’s History Month
  - AAUW California Legislative Agenda released, will be available on our website
  - Equal Pay Day – March 15th\*. Opportunity to educate your community and your membership about the Gender Pay Gap
  - Lobby Days! Mandatory training for all participants on March 20th; two days of advocacy with state legislators, March 21st and March 22nd
- April – Proposed changes for 2023-25 Public Policy Priorities submitted for vote by all members. Opportunity for all members to weigh in on the committee’s recommendations.
- May – Asian American and Pacific Islander Women Equal Pay Day, May 3rd
- June – Pride Month. Opportunity to educate your members on the challenges faced by women in the LGBTQ+ communities

\*Note that these dates are tentative; they are not official AAUW-confirmed dates at this point and may be subject to change.

If you joined AAUW because you believe in our mission to advance equity for women and girls through advocacy, education and research, don’t miss one or more of these opportunities to get involved!

**What I need to know:** There are extensive upcoming opportunities to become involved with AAUW California public policy issues, in particular participating in Lobby Days to meet with legislators and advocate for top priority bills.

**What I need to do:** Be sure these monthly events are noted on your branch calendar and in your branch communications.

**Should I include this in my branch newsletter?** Yes, share the opportunity to your members to sign up for Lobby Days and make their voices heard with local legislators. Deadline: January 18th.

