

# Supporting Safer Schools

By Jeanne Delp

The year 2023 saw AAUW-CA and National taking action on several issues of concern to our democracy. A major priority in 2023 has been public schools. School environment, equitable access to education, support for the mental health of students and the curricula—how and what is to be taught in our schools--has received increased press and public attention. This will continue into 2024 as both national and local elections take place.

On the national level, Congress introduced the Safe Schools Improvement Act, which focuses on strategies to prevent harassment. This will have a particular impact on students of color and LGBTQ+ students who are so often the targets of harassment and bullying. National urges us to contact our members of Congress urging their support of the **Safe Schools Improvement Act**.

National has also endorsed the **Counseling Not Criminalization in Schools Act** just recently introduced to Congress. While it would prohibit the use of federal funds to increase police presence in schools (itself a topic of controversy) the bill would provide \$5 billion in grant funding to help schools hire more counselors, social workers, other behavioral health personnel, and implement services in schools that create positive and safe climates for all students. Contact our members of Congress urging their support of this bill.

AAUW-CA Public Policy not only took action on the school issues as outlined in the November *Twig*, but also worked diligently to inform our local lawmakers of several bills before the legislature that matter to AAUW-CA. In fact, due to our volunteer members who presented AAUW's rationale and support for bills on Lobby Day, **86.3% of our priority legislation was signed into law!** How about that for success!

For information concerning our priority legislation, click on the [California AAUW Bill Tracking Report](#).

For information on how a bill makes its way to the governor, click on the [California AAUW Path of a Bill](#).

AND for icing on the cake, read the following:

Building on his **Family Agenda** to promote educational freedom and success, Governor Gavin Newsom signed AB 1078 by Assembly member Dr. Corey Jackson (D-Moreno Valley), which bans “book bans” in schools, prohibits censorship of instructional materials, and strengthens California law requiring schools to provide all students access to textbooks that teach about California’s diverse communities.

What Gov. Newsom said: “From Temecula to Tallahassee, fringe ideologues across the country are attempting to whitewash history and ban books from schools. With this new law, we’re cementing California’s role as the true freedom state: a place where families — not political fanatics — have the freedom to decide what’s right for them.”

