

Public Policy

You've Come a Long Way. (Baby?)

By Jeanne Delp

Some of us might be old enough to remember the above advertising slogan popular in the 1960's. It continues to be part of our conversations to this day. But, what did it advertise? A quick internet search refreshed my memory—Virginia Slims—the slim menthol cigarette TV ads aimed at women. After viewing one of the actual ads and cringing, I can honestly say, “**Yes, we have come a long way!**”

Yes, women are now able to embrace many rights that were denied us in the past. However, our advancement has been sporadic. A case in point is women's right to abortion: having won a 1973 Constitutional right to abortion via the Fourteenth Amendment, we saw that right disappear in the SCOTUS 2022 DOBBS decision. A tally of where the different states stand on Sexual and Reproductive Health can be found at: <https://tobacco.stanford.edu/video/women/> We might have a long way to go.

AAUW supports choice in determining one's reproductive life and increased access to health care and family planning services.

<https://www.aauw.org/resources/policy/position-repro/>

True, we women are able to embrace many rights that were forbidden in the past, but if it concerns LGBTQ+ and DEI rights, it's as though some of our national and state legislators want to return to that past—the 1960s? On July 11, 2024, the US House of Representatives voted to pass AAUW-OPPOSED Congressional Review Act resolution HJ Res. 165 overturning new Title IX rules that provide strengthened protections against gender-biased discrimination in schools. “The party-line vote (210-205) would also prevent future efforts by federal agencies to reinstate a substantially similar rule. . . .The Senate plans to vote on their resolution in late July.”

AAUW CEO Gloria L. Blackwell commented, “Representatives who voted for this resolution are continuing to subject students to policies that stack the deck against survivors of sexual assault and harassment.” **We STILL have a long way to go.**

The good news is: **We have come a long way.** Closer to home and the present:

Governor Newsom signed the [first-in-the-nation law](#) Monday, which bans districts from requiring school staff to disclose a student's gender identity or sexual orientation to any other person without the child's permission, with some exceptions. It also requires the state Department of Education to develop resources for families of LGBTQ students in grade 7 through high school. The law will take effect in January. For more on this issue: <https://www.nbcnews.com/nbc-out/out-news/school-district-sues-california-governor-newsom-transgender-law-rcna162292>

Yes, we women are able to embrace many rights that were restricted in the past. **And Yes, we have come a long way** with AAUW at the forefront in advancing equity for women and girls. The list of what we have influenced is lengthy and impressive. Just Google AAUW Accomplishments and find out how President Obama was involved in

women's equal pay or what AAUW did with \$6.25 million to help women achieve their goals or how AAUW was influential in helping pregnant women workers and why eliminating \$7.4 billion in student loan debt for hundreds of thousands of borrowers will affect more women than men.

We HAVE come a long way. As AAUW CEO Gloria Blackwell writes, "Your advocacy fuels change. The future is ours to define. . . *Together*, we will continue to ensure that women's rights are protected. . . We can only accomplish this work *together*."