

With this issue of Highlights, State Public Policy Chairs, Barbara Price and Jacqui Rogers will be framing public policy as it relates to the [AAUW Strategic Plan](#) and [AAUW Public Policy Priorities](#). We hope this will help focus for your work.

Economic Security - To achieve economic security for all women, AAUW advocates:

- Pay equity and fairness in compensation and benefits
- Greater availability of and access to a high standard of benefits and policies that promote work-life balance, including quality and affordable dependent care and paid family, medical, and sick leave
- Increasing the number of quality jobs that pay a living wage



At the federal level, the House passed the Paycheck Fairness Act. Now we need to get it passed in the Senate.

In Pennsylvania, our work continues to pass **pay equity** legislation during this session of the state legislature which ends December 31, 2020. The good news is that we now have a senate bill, [SB721](#) sponsored by Senators Santarsiero and Collett that is exactly the same as [HB850](#) sponsored by Representatives Sims and Davis. This is the first time we have had a comparable bill in the senate. Thank your

legislators if they are co-sponsors of these bills or if not, ask them to support the bills. Click on each bill to check for co-sponsors.

Another issue we will follow this year is **raising the minimum wage**. The state minimum wage is \$7.25 per hour, lower than all neighboring states. The Keystone Research Center has posted fact sheets estimating the number and characteristics of workers affected by a minimum wage increase to \$15. The factsheets present, data specific to [Counties](#) and to [Senate and state House Districts](#). These fact sheets refute the usual arguments that only teens at fast food restaurants make minimum wage. The majority of people affected are women and people over the age of 40. Look up your county and your legislator. Great pieces to leave behind when you visit your legislators.

Another way to view the minimum wage issue is to compare it to a living wage. The [Living Wage Calculator](#) lets you see the hourly rate that an individual must earn to support their family by county. There are no counties in Pennsylvania where the minimum wage provides a living wage. Raising the minimum wage would go a long way toward alleviating the wage gap. AAUW-PA supports the One Fair Wage bills, [HB1215](#) and [SB12](#).

We are also pleased to support two new bills that address **family and medical leave** in Pennsylvania. The Family Care Act bills [SB580](#) and [HB1739](#) are bi-partisan and establish a state insurance program to provide paid leave. It would be funded by small deductions from the employee's pay with no cost to the employer. We are working on this with

the Women and Girls Foundation and Pathways PA, a state Gateway to Equity awardee. Please sign a petition in support of the [Family Care Act](#).

PA Supreme Court Affirms Paid Sick Days in Pittsburgh

The Pennsylvania Supreme Court has affirmed the City of Pittsburgh's authority to enforce the Paid Sick Days Act (PSDA) signed into law in 2015. As a result, approximately 49,000 Pittsburgh-based workers will finally have access to paid sick days.

“This is a huge win for the workers who will no longer be forced to lose pay if they are too sick to work or need to care for a sick family member, but also for public health,” says Women’s Law Project attorney Susan J. Frietsche, who co-authored and filed a brief supporting the City of Pittsburgh’s effort to enforce the PSDA. **AAUW-PA signed on to the brief as a supporting organization.**

The brief, notes the lack of paid sick days is particularly harmful to low-wage working women and people of color. Women, who still labor under a persistent gender wage gap, also bear a disproportionate share of family caregiving responsibilities: two-thirds of all family caregivers are female. Workers without paid sick days are less likely to go to the doctor or access preventive care.

By recognizing Pittsburgh’s fundamental authority to protect the health, safety and welfare of its citizens, the ruling also sets a significant precedent for local enforcement of a wide range of local public health ordinances.

Education - To support a strong system of public education that promotes gender fairness, equity, diversity and inclusivity, and to address the barriers and implicit

biases that hinder the advancement of women and girls, 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 and to charter schools that do not adhere to the same civil rights and accountability standards as required of other public schools

A recent [Penn Live Editorial](#) highlighted the five signs of a failed school district. They include:

- Angry Parents
- Demoralized Teachers
- Shaky Finances
- Low Student Achievement
- A Community in Despair

Then, there is the question of how much money and resources school districts receive from the state and from property taxes. “You never see a failing school district in a wealthy community,” said Susan Spicka, executive director of Education Voters of Pennsylvania and vice president of the Shippensburg School Board. “The sad fact is, Spicka said, “We live in a state that does not value poor children.”

In February, Education Voters of PA [issued a report about cyber charter school funding](#). It detailed how capping cyber charter school tuition rates at the actual cost of educating a child at home on a computer would eliminate wasteful spending and save more than \$250 million in taxpayer dollars. It also detailed serious issues with cyber charter accountability and performance.

In June, [Stanford University released a devastating report about student performance in cyber charter schools](#). The report found that PA’s cyber charter school students lose the equivalent of 106 days of learning per year in reading and 118 days in

math when compared to their peers who attend schools in school districts.

Not only are Pennsylvanians overpaying cyber charter schools, they are overpaying for failure. Please help ensure that your state lawmakers understand that their constituents expect them to take action on cyber charter school funding reform when they return to work this fall.

[Click HERE to email your state senator and representative to ask them about their position on cyber charter school funding and accountability reform today!](#)

Governor Wolf recently announced that he will use his executive power to hold charters to “the same ethical and transparency standards of public schools.” He plans to direct the Pennsylvania Department of Education to make these changes through regulation.

Wolf’s proposal would allow districts to cap enrollment at charter schools that fail to provide “high-quality” education or equitable access and would ramp up oversight of charter management companies — the private companies that sometimes provide academic and logistical services to non-profit charter schools. He’d also charge charter schools for the cost state agencies incur to oversee them and reform charter enrollment practices, among other changes. More details and how your district is affected at [Reform PA Charter Schools](#).

For more information on AAUW-PA efforts on education be sure to read **AAUW Members Help Pass Education Budget** by Fran Pierce (West Chester, Chester County) and **New Research Reports Charter School Data** by Carol Hodes (State College) in the September Keystoner. Both Fran and Carol are members of the **AAUW-PA Education Committee**

The **AAUW-PA Education Committee** is responsible for coordinating the statewide efforts regarding K-12 and Higher

Education legislation. Committee members are the Chairs of branch education committees (if the branch has one) and any AAUW branch or national members interested in public education.

We don’t know if your branch has an Education Chair because that is not one of the Counterparts we track. Therefore, **please tell us if you have an Education Committee and the chair’s name and email address.** If we don’t know who is in the role, we can’t ensure they will receive information about statewide efforts.
Ann Pehle, AAUW-PA Education Committee Chair

Redistricting – From our friends at Fair Districts

Great news! We’ve learned that the House State Government Committee has scheduled a public meeting on redistricting reform: September 18, 9 am, in the Irvis Building. FairDistricts PA leaders will be invited to present testimony.

Other good news: Fair Districts now has 66,000 petition signatures, 320 resolutions and an amazing record of 750 informational meetings where gerrymandering and why it matters has been explained.

Pennsylvania Lobby Corps



With all that is happening, we really need your help. As a Branch Public Policy Chair,

we hope you consider yourself part of our Lobby Corps. What does that mean? There are a few simple, standard activities.

- Sign up to become a Two Minute Activist for AAUW's action alert network at <https://www.aauw.org/what-we-do/public-policy/two-minute-activist/>
- Respond to action alerts that come from AAUW and AAUW-PA
- Add phone numbers to your cell phone for quick calling. Find your state senator, state representative and federal representative at <https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/home/findyourlegislator/>
- Get to know your state legislators committee assignments
- Schedule meetings with your state Senator, state Representative or their aides
- Call their office to offer thanks when they vote for our issues

If you do any of these things on a regular basis or know of branch members who do, please let us know so we can count you and them as members of our **Lobby Corps**.

Public Policy Reorganization

It has become apparent that only two people working on statewide Public Policy activities is not sufficient. We have decided to split the state board Public Policy Chair roles into Administrative (Jacqui Rogers) and Issues (Barbara Price).

As part of this reorganization of activities, we created a new position – Issues Specialist – to focus on one specific issue and “report” to the Public Policy Chair—Issues, (Barbara Price). These are off board positions. If you know someone in your branch who has a passion for any of the following issues, please have them contact Barbara Price (aauwpapp1@gmail.com) for more details.

GOTV - Responsible for advocacy on the issues of Get Out the Vote, voter registration, voter education, redistricting reform, and voting reform. Is the primary liaison with Fair Districts PA.

Education - Responsible for advocacy on the issues of public-school funding, public charter and public cyber schools, business tax credit legislation, and vouchers. Is primary liaison with Education Voters PA and PA Schools Work.

Title IX - Responsible for advocacy on the issues of K-12 Title IX issues (such as bullying and gender- based harassment) and college campus sexual assault. Encourage branches to connect with local Title IX coordinators in K-12 school district and local college (if applicable).

Be sure to let us know about your branch public policy activities and events involving coalition building, economic security, education, equal pay, GoTV, visiting legislators, letters to the editor, redistricting reform, Start Smart/Work Smart, STEM, or Title IX.

Send event details (name and type of event, date held, outcomes) to

Jacqui aauwpapp2@gmail.com

and

Barbara aauwpapp1@gmail.com

Public Policy Conference Call scheduled for September 17 from 7 to 8 pm. Further details will be emailed to you in September.

As always we are here to answer your questions and are only an email away.