The AAUW gender policy agenda outlines priority issues for the 2020 election season. As a non-partisan organization, AAUW does not endorse specific candidates, but throughout our 140-year history, we have been a staunch advocate for policies that improve the lives of girls, women and their families. Here’s what AAUW would like to see implemented to advance gender equality in education and the workplace.

**Economic Security**

**Ensure Equal Pay for Equal Work**. Women working full time in Pennsylvania make 81 cents on the dollar as compared to men, and women of color experience even wider gaps. Policymakers need to close the stubborn gender and racial pay gaps.

* **Federal**: pass the Paycheck Fairness Act, the Pay Equity for All Act and the Fair Pay Act.
* **Pennsylvania**: Pass pay equity bills, HB850 and SB721.

**Implement Paid Leave and Paid Sick Days**. Unlike the majority of developed countries worldwide, the U.S. does not guarantee paid time off for illness, family care or parental leave.

* **Federal**: pass the Family and Medical Insurance Leave (FAMILY) Act and the Healthy Families Act.
* **Pennsylvania:** pass the Family Care Act paid leave insurance program, HB1739 and SB580 which have bi-partisan support in both the house and senate.

**Stop Harassment in the Workplace**. Instituting robust protections against sexual, racial and other forms of harassment in employment will lead to great economic security for women.

* **Federal**: pass the BE HEARD in the Workplace Act, the EMPOWER Act, and the Forced Arbitration Injustice Repeal Act.
* **Pennsylvania:** The Creation of the #MeToo in Pennsylvania General Assembly Act, SB 480 in the senate and HB 1000 in the house covers government employees and bans mandatory arbitration and nondisclosure agreements as a condition of employment, codifies strong anti-retaliation policies. HB 849 also bans non-disclosure agreements.

**Raise the Minimum Wage and Eliminate the Tipped Minimum Wage**. Women comprise a majority of the low-wage workforce, and Black women and Latinas are significantly over-represented in the low-wage workforce.

* **Federal**: pass the Raise Wage Act of 2019.
* **Pennsylvania:** pass One Fair Wage , HB1215 to raise the state minimum wage to $15 per hour and eliminate the tipped minimum wage.

**Close the Retirement Gap.** Because of such factors as the gender pay gap and time away from work for care giving responsibilities, women lose out on hundreds of thousands of dollars in earnings, making it difficult for them to accumulate savings.

* **Federal**: maintain and strengthen current Social Security benefits, including full cost-of-living adjustments, guaranteed lifetime benefits, a progressive benefit formula, spousal and widow benefits and disability and survivor benefits.
* **State**: require employers to offer a retirement savings plan for workers or create a marketplace to facilitate plan assessments. A number of pending bills require transparency of plans, but seem to be mostly directed at government plans.

**Protect Pregnant Workers**. Pregnant workers are sometimes pushed out of their jobs unnecessarily, but simple reasonable accommodations could help protect their health and ensure that they could continue working to support their families.

* **Federal**: pass the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act.
* **Pennsylvania:** pass HB 1417, Workplace Accommodations for pregnant workers.

**Education**

**Defend and Strengthen Title IX**. Since the passage of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, schools have made significant strides in providing equal access to education. But barriers still exist, particularly for women and underrepresented populations.

* **Federal**: pass the Hold Accountable and Lend Transparency on Campus Sexual Violence Act, the Patsy T. Mink and Louise M. Slaughter Gender Equity in Education Act (GEEA), the Tyler Clementi Higher Education Anti-Harassment Act, and advocate against regulatory action seeking to weaken Title IX protections and enforcement.
* **State:** enact laws that align with the statutory provisions and intent of Title IX, making it clear and easy for schools to support students in accessing their education.

**Reduce Student Debt**. Women hold two-thirds of the nation’s $1.46 trillion educational debt. Policymakers should protect grant programs, champion tuition- and debt-free options and expand loan forgiveness programs.

* **Federal**: protect and expand the Pell Grant Program, make loan repayment and forgiveness programs more accessible to borrowers and address the costs students face beyond tuition by supporting programs like the Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) program.
* **Pennsylvania:** pass HB244 and SB111 the Pennsylvania Promise Act that covers tuition and non-tuition expenses so the neediest students can succeed.

**Expand Opportunities for Women and Girls in STEM**. Careers in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) are rapidly growing, but bias and discrimination inhibit women and girls from pursuing these fields.

* **Federal**: pass the STEM Opportunities Act.
* **State**: establish grants and programs that encourage women and minorities to pursue STEM education and training.

**Foundational Rights**

**Expand and Protect the Right to Vote**. Voting discrimination is a threat to the very foundation of our democracy. Ensuring the right to vote is a prerequisite to establishing all the other policies AAUW advocates.

* **Federal**: pass the Voting Rights Amendment Act.
* **Pennsylvania**: pass HB22 and HB23 to end partisan gerrymandering by creating nonpartisan redistricting procedures.

**Ensure Access to High-Quality Healthcare**. It is critical to women’s economic security to have access to high-quality, affordable healthcare, including reproductive health care and family planning, and to have the control over such decisions.

* **Federal**: pass the Women’s Health Protection Act and protect the Affordable Care Act.
* **Pennsylvania:** SB 982 allows young adults to stay on parents’ insurance to 26. SB 51 protects essential health benefits. SB 50 and HB 471 protect pre-existing conditions.

**Ratify the Equal Rights Amendment**. The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) would guarantee constitutional equality between men and women — a concept the majority of Americans agree is necessary and that most people believe is already codified.

* **Federal**: pass the joint resolution removing the deadline for ratification of the ERA or support the language of the ERA as a new amendment.
* **Pennsylvania:** Pennsylvania ratified the ERA September 26, 1972.