

Economic Security

Welcome to 2021 and the new legislative session which begins in Harrisburg on January 5 for both the House and Senate. This session will run from January 2021 through November 2022. All the bills which AAUW-PA supported last session that did not pass will have to be reintroduced. The prime sponsors of the previous House bills have all been reelected. In the Senate they have either been reelected or would be continuing as they were not up for election last year. We will be watching for the introduction of bills addressing the economic issues AAUW-PA has been supporting.

- Pay equity
- Raising the minimum wage
- Paid leave.

Education

We will continue to work with Education Voters PA, <http://educationvoterspa.org> to monitor what is happening with charter schools and PA Schools Work, to monitor what is happening with school funding. <https://paschoolswork.org>.

The Pennsylvania school funding lawsuit will go to trial in 2021. Want to know how much your school district is underfunded per student? You can find state wide data for your district at [Fund Our Schools](#).

Improving the Operation and Transparency of Government

Redistricting - We will continue to support redistricting reform efforts. As with all other legislation, new bills will have to be

introduced to address this issue. However, there is one exception to this and that is a proposed constitutional amendment to have judges elected by region and not statewide. We alerted you to this in the October issue of Highlights.

Our friends at Fair Districts report that in the 2019-2020 session, the PA General Assembly passed a constitutional amendment that would empower our state legislature to create judicial districts for PA higher courts. Candidates for Supreme Court and other appeals courts would be elected by voters in these districts rather than running statewide. If that amendment passes again early this next session, it could go to a public vote as soon as the 2021 primary election.

In effect, the judicial district amendment would undermine constitutional checks and balances among our branches of state government and would open the door to a new, unprecedented version of gerrymandering. No other state allows legislators as much power in drawing judicial districts.

The bill was pushed through without public hearings, expert testimony or any hint of due diligence, with just minutes spent in discussion in both House and Senate committees.

Carol Kuniholm, Chair of Fair Districts PA, will give a presentation followed by a panel discussion with Pennsylvanians for Modern Courts President Deborah Gross and others.

January 6, 2021, 4:00 pm to 5:30 pm.

[RSVP here](#) A Zoom link will be sent to you the day of the event.

You can also find talking points and more details on the web site of the Keystone Research Center and PA Budget and Policy Center.

<https://krc-pbpc.org/talking-points-judicial-gerrymandering/>

In case you are unable to attend the Fair Districts webinar, a quick video explaining judicial gerrymandering is available at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1jxID6kCOARPCBaAXCq3Aw5pAAEI86FDk/view>

Running for Office – Another way to ensure good government is for more women to run for office. The Pennsylvania Center for Women and Politics at Chatham University is again sponsoring training for women who want to run for office.

This year, **Ready to Run Pennsylvania** is all virtual, FREE, and scheduled to fit into your lunch breaks. On select dates between January 22 to February 24 from 12:00 - 1:00 pm elected officials and campaign experts will teach you what you need to know to run for office or get involved in the political sphere. Choose your own slate of sessions to fit your needs. [View the schedule](#). Pick your dates and [Register](#) today!

AAUW Action Fund Washington Update Newsletter

Over the last month, AAUW has communicated with the Biden-Harris transition team about the actions we and our coalition partners would like to see the incoming administration take to support the economic security and education of women and girls. COVID-19 has had an unprecedented impact on women and people of color, and we must take bold steps to address economic disparities and inequitable educational opportunities that have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

We asked the Biden-Harris Administration to focus on equity issues, including

increasing the minimum wage, advancing pay equity, canceling student debt, suspending implementation of the new Title IX rule, and prioritizing gender and racial equity across departments and programs. You can read [AAUW Priorities for Biden/Harris](#) here.

We also urged them to appoint candidates to key cabinet positions who have a deep understanding of systemic barriers to equal opportunity faced by historically marginalized communities and have a record of advocating for the civil rights of all working people and students they serve.

Stay informed by signing up for [Two Minute Activist](#). The sign-up form is at the bottom right of the page.

Moms Rising Event

If you are interested in learning about efforts to strategize about **federal paid leave** legislation, Moms Rising is planning an event on Friday, January 22 from 10am-3pm to strategize on how to advance federal paid leave efforts from here in Pennsylvania. There will be updates on opportunities in the new Congress and administration, brainstorming of creative tactics for advancing workplace justice issues, and generally bringing heads together to regroup for 2021. Watch for more details the first week of January.

Public Policy and Covid-19

We know it is difficult at this time to do public policy as we usually do. However, many legislators are doing town halls by Zoom or even live streaming on Facebook. Both of these platforms allow you to ask questions. Even if they do not have office hours, they are only a phone call or email away. You can still let them know what issues are important to you.

Attached to the email of this newsletter is the updated list of the Pennsylvania

legislators who represent your branches in the House of Representatives in Washington and your Senators and Representatives in Harrisburg. Newly elected legislators are highlighted in yellow. Let us know if we are missing anyone.

These people may not have an office or phone as yet. That information will eventually be listed on the state web site <https://www.legis.state.pa.us>. Click on the tab for Senate or House. The drop down menu shows senators or representatives, and you can select to see the list alphabetically or by district number. Find your legislator and click on their name. You can then see their profile with office information and the bills they are sponsoring. If you have someone who is new, you may want to reach out to them once their phone number is listed to introduce yourself and the issues that are important to AAUW.

Let us know if you have any virtual or phone meetings with legislators. It is possible to still do public policy in the midst of a pandemic. Perhaps it is even more important to do so, since the virus has had a significant impact on women, especially women of color.

As always, we are here to answer your questions and are only an email away. Hopefully this finds you all well and staying safe. Looking forward to a better year in 2021.

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