

Political vs. Partisan: A Guide to Your AAUW Advocacy Actions



AAUW is a nonpartisan organization that promotes equity for women and girls, and we have a [long herstory of creating social change through public policy efforts](#). Because this work is often done within the political world, there is sometimes confusion about AAUW's political work versus our nonpartisan stance.

Our work has always been political but has never been partisan. Values influence our work, but what is the line between being political and being partisan? Political work can be characterized by shared values, working toward a common goal, and an end result that is best for the community as a whole. Put simply, being political is a way to influence legislation and

regulation through government or public affairs, while partisan activities have a firm adherence to a party, faction, or person.

For example, AAUW believes [there is a gender pay gap](#) and that we should do something to address it. AAUW believes [sexual assault is a big problem on campuses](#) that undermines women's access to equal educational opportunities. These are political positions, but we work to solve them in a nonpartisan way. We'll work with any policy makers who share our goals — even if they differ with us on another facet of the AAUW [Public Policy Priorities](#).

When members take advocacy actions in the name of AAUW, those actions must be political rather than partisan. Here are some things to keep in mind when determining if your actions are political or partisan:

DO

- Remain nonpartisan. Do not endorse candidates in partisan races.
- Work on issues guided by our values and mission, including taking positions on ballot initiatives that are in line with AAUW's Public Policy Priorities.
- Engage with candidates and elected officials from all major parties equally, making sure questions are phrased in a neutral manner.
- Encourage voter registration for everyone, regardless of their political persuasion.

DO NOT

- Expressly advocate for or endorse any particular partisan candidate.
- Encourage voter registration for a particular party.
- Share AAUW membership lists with campaigns or political parties.
- Fundraise for partisan candidates or coordinate any election activity with a campaign or political party.

AAUW is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, and most AAUW state-level organizations and branches have a 501(c)(4) tax status. In order to protect this tax status, there are rules that must be followed. Be sure to know the tax status of your branch, and always check your local election laws before hosting or promoting an event.

For more detailed policies, information about your branch's tax status, or help determining whether your action is political or partisan, contact VoterEd@aauw.org.



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