



MARCH 2025 | ISSUE 19

Public Policy News

A monthly dispatch from the AAUW California Public Policy Team

OVERWHELMED BY NEWS?

Approaching News Consumption in this Era

As we did in December, we are once again checking in with a reminder that, your wellbeing is important. Not only do we see an uptick in policies and actions that run counter to our core values, but we also see/hear a constant stream of news about these changes. You may be feeling overwhelmed, exhausted, fearful, or anxious. Monitoring news on these changes is important, but can be detrimental to your mental health. See p.2 for action items alongside tips on how to balance wellbeing, media consumption, and action.

LOBBY DAYS 2025

April 8-9, 2025

We have had overwhelming interest in this year's Lobby Days event, with 77 people registered to participate in person at the Capitol on April 8th, and 107 people registered to participate via Zoom on April 9th! It is incredibly inspiring and humbling to be part of an organization that is so passionate about advocating to make the world better for women and girls. **We are grateful.**

The Public Policy Committee is now hard at work to form teams and schedule meetings, as well as evaluate bills for our 2025 Legislative Agenda.

From now through March 21st, we will be posting information [HERE](#) on the event logistics and the bill details. Please check back for updates.

For any questions about the event, please reach out to publicpolicy@aauw-ca.org.

SHARING IS CARING

Share PP News!

A humble request to please share PP News more broadly! We want everyone inside and outside of AAUW, including anyone not regularly involved in Public Policy, to have important action tools and updates. **You can also share the link to our [PP News Archive](#).** Thank you in advance!

UPCOMING AAA WEBINAR

DEI in the Balance--Strategies for Moving Forward in Uncertain Times

Thursday, March 20, 2025 10am-11am Pacific.

[Register Here.](#)

BRANCH PUBLIC POLICY CHAIRS' MEETING

NEXT MEETING

Thursday April 3, 2025
at 3:00pm Pacific



ZOOM LINK [HERE](#)

Click [HERE](#) for meeting information.



Unless they fall on a holiday, bimonthly Peer Group Meetings will be held on the first Thursday at 3:00pm Pacific in Feb, Apr, Jun

SIGN UP FOR ACTION ALERTS [HERE.](#)

WHERE IS THAT?



Key links to your public policy resources:

- [Google Workspace](#)
- [Branch liaisons](#)
- Contact us at publicpolicy@aauw-ca.org
- Tell us about your branch public policy events by filling out this [form](#).

Implementation of Project 2025

Our core values are under attack. Take action now.



As Co-Directors Amy Hom and Missy Maceyko outlined in a [webinar](#) in October 2024, the objectives of Project 2025 directly counter the Public Policy Priorities of AAUW California. **With federal policy pronouncements and changes continuing to take place at a head spinning pace**, it is clear that changes are underway to make Project 2025 become reality (track implementation [HERE](#)). To respond to the attack on the people and issues we care about, and to fulfill the mission of our organization, “to advance equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, and research,” we will continue to compile resources to help you take action to fight back. This is a critical moment, as the changes that are being implemented may have long-lasting impacts, locally and globally.

Even as we are asking you to act, **we want to remind you that your wellbeing is important**. With an uptick in policies and enforcement actions that run counter to our core values, you may be feeling overwhelmed, exhausted, fearful, or anxious. Action is important, but self care is also a political act. Be gentle with yourself and acknowledge your efforts.

We also encourage you to check out this guide on how to read the news more strategically, to still be able to follow events while preventing burnout and protecting your mental health.

You should also consider **staying connected**--with AAUW members and with those outside of AAUW who are engaged in efforts to push back. To this end, here are some examples of individuals, groups, and organizations that are pushing back in different ways:

- direct refusal to comply, [via mass resignation](#),
- showing up in person not only to protest, but also to support, including showing love for beleaguered federal workers at USAID,
- initiating and sustaining [legal challenges](#).

AAUW California is building out our own action-items database, which is being released to the California Board to review in March, and which will go live for you in April. **Regardless, we will continue to provide a short list of targeted resources each month.**



We ask you to take action by choosing one self-focused, one other-focused, and one political-focused item from the list below. This month the topic area is...

Take Action: Sexual Assault Violence Prevention



Self-Focused: Education

- learn more about [the organizations country-wide](#) that are on the front lines of dealing with sexual assault violence
- read through the resources provided by the [Domestic Violence Awareness Project](#) and [the CDC](#).



Other-Focused: Education & Connection

- whatever you take away from your homework in self-education--be sure to tell one friend about what you learned. You can do this over lunch.
- work with others to [organize an event](#) to raise awareness and dispel myths around gender-based and sexual assault violence in your community.



Politically-Focused: Outreach to Legislators

- [use 5-calls](#) to reach out to federal legislators to oppose the abolition of the Department of Education, which will impact enforcement of existing sexual and gender-based violence protections under Title IX.
- text SIGN PNNWWO to 50409 to contact legislators, urging them to back efforts to get money flowing to relevant organizations and programs to raise awareness about and prevent sexual assault violence (e.g. [Department of Justice, Office of Violence Against Women](#)). See NL article, below, for additional agencies.

Follow [AAUW California's Petitions Page](#) on Resistbot

Prepare for Sexual Assault Prevention Month in April

By Claire Noonan, Member AAUW California Public Policy Committee



Sexual assault violence prevention calls for the creation of safer communities. Addressing the root causes of this kind of violence is difficult as it involves a multipronged approach, including improving street and housing conditions, providing education, and offering support services. We should work to advance policies at workplaces and schools, discuss sexual assault and its consequences with friends and family, and prioritize prevention in our communities.

Official channels for raising awareness about sexual assault violence and creating and implementing the policies needed for prevention has a long history in the United States; however, given the current administration's attack on "DEI," much of this work is now under threat of being dismantled.

Violence awareness began officially when the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) became law in 1984, providing the primary federal funding for domestic violence victims and their children via emergency shelters and related assistance. The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), passed by Congress in 1994, is comprehensive federal legislation to end violence against women. In 2001, the National Sexual Violence Resource Center coordinated the first national Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM), building on years of advocacy and awareness-building. In 2009, President Barack Obama officially declared April to be Sexual Assault Awareness Month, which presidents have proclaimed by every year since then.

As part of this wider federal push, awareness-raising and prevention efforts around sexual assault violence have been more firmly embedded in core policies and practices. For instance, the Department of Defense has been trying to create a culture to eliminate sexual assault, requiring a personal commitment from all Service members. Educational institutions have benefitted as well: the final Title IX revisions in April 2024 by President Joe Biden reflected the stronger shift to prevent assault actions on school campuses. These revisions also sought to protect more people, expanding the definition of "sex-based harassment" to include harassment based on sex characteristics, sexual orientation, gender identity, sex stereotypes, and pregnancy. At the state level, in September 2024 Governor Newsom signed eight bills on domestic violence. The legislation created a new victims' services fund using penalties from white-collar crimes and expanded the ability of victims to access restraining orders.

While all of this movement has been positive, by the second week of President Donald Trump's current administration, the Office of Management and Budget had ordered a freeze of all federal financial assistance in all agencies including those that oversee government programs and funding for organizations that provide domestic violence and sexual assault services, such as Health and Human Services, Center for Disease Control, and the Department of Justice. Multiple court orders have blocked the freezes from taking effect, but in some cases funds haven't been received for programs aimed at preventing sexual violence.

In addition, the current Administration has attacked the Office of Family Violence Prevention and Services and the Office on Violence Against Women, who must now disclose information that may further eliminate funding and resources, such as whether grants are being used to support "removable or illegal aliens or immigrants;" to "promote gender ideology;" or to advance "illegal DEI" programs—although at the time of writing, early challenges have signaled that enforcement of these provisions and denial of funding may be unconstitutional.

As individuals and non-profit organizations, we can take action. We can contact our Congressmembers and state officials to back efforts to get the money flowing to relevant organizations and programs that raise awareness of and prevent sexual assault violence.

We can also act in our local communities to reduce sexual assault violence. We can ask to improve lighting to make streets and other public spaces safer. We can make sure our city, county, and public health officials promote policies for families and children, address economic security, and provide access to safe, stable housing. We can collaborate with community-led organizations that coordinate resources and services that help with trauma, mental health and substance use, all of which lead to sexual abuse. (from CDC-Violence Prevention)

Overall, we can all work to support the organizations country-wide that are on the front lines of dealing with sexual assault violence. Click here for downloadable free materials to share from the Domestic Violence Awareness Project.

Meet the Public Policy Interns!

We are so excited to have them on board and are already impressed by their passion and fantastic work.

MALENA CLARK

Malena Clark is a new AAUW Public Policy Intern and an applied statistics major at California State University, Long Beach (CSULB). Throughout her academic journey, she has actively sought to diversify her educational experience. Passionate about human rights, Malena is dedicated to advocating for systems that protect and uphold these fundamental freedoms. Outside of her studies, she works as an Educational Specialist, supporting high school students with learning disabilities to thrive academically. In addition to her educational work, Malena is the drummer for Trestles, a band deeply involved in the California music scene. Trestles has performed at numerous events, with all proceeds benefiting various charitable causes. Malena's commitment to both education and social impact reflects her dedication to creating positive change in her community and beyond.



MARISOL CARLOS HERRERO

Marisol Carlos Herrero is an undergraduate Political Science student at Long Beach State University, passionate about public policy and community outreach. As an AAUW Gender in Public Policy Intern, Marisol maintains a passion for advancing gender equity through legislation and upholding reproductive rights & liberties. Outside of the AAUW, Marisol is also involved in policy advocacy work with Young Invincibles, where she oversees state and local events that establish power building for marginalized communities, centering on advancing healthcare equity, workforce development, higher education accessibility & civic engagement. Marisol is a first-generation student and daughter of immigrants, and has grown committed to uplifting the rights of underserved communities, dedicated to fostering inclusivity she hopes to continue to empower unheard voices, expand political representation, and advance legislation that truly serves the public.



ROHAN BHARDWAJ

Rohan Bhardwaj is a fourth-year student at California State University, Long Beach (CSULB), interning with AAUW's Public Policy division. Growing up in the East Bay area of Northern California, Rohan received an education shaped by ethnic studies, which deepened their commitment to advocacy for marginalized communities. As a first-generation Punjabi Queer individual, they took an early role in activism, laying the foundation for their focus in legal reform. Rohan is now pursuing a major in Political Science: Law, Politics, and Policy, aspiring to become a public interest lawyer and drive systemic change. They hope to emphasize the power of policy in creating tangible progress while advancing social justice through legal avenues. Beyond their academic and advocacy work, Rohan is an avid snowboarder and an active competitor with the CSULB Ski and Snowboarding Club. In their free time, they have been learning how to sew as both a creative outlet and a means of practicing sustainable consumption. Through their efforts in policy, law, and community engagement, Rohan remains committed to fostering equity, representation, and meaningful change in every space they enter.

