**AAUW MN Public Policy Update**

**July/August 2020**

Jan Carey, AAUW-MN VP Public Policy

Greetings AAUW MN Branch Public Policy chairs,

We all continue to feel unsure, anxious, and fearful during this time in Earth’s history. But we need to maintain routines and interests in all things important in our lives. Keeping focused and active is the motivation needed more now than before. AAUW has solid, proactive plans to bring about the results needed to meet the challenges facing us as we open our economy and move toward to a normal way of life.

I have continued advocacy by attending numerous ZOOM meetings, webinars and reviewing resources available on the [**new** AAUW website](https://www.aauw.org/) and forwarding that information to you in previous Public Policy updates.

In the May update, I posted information regarding voter rights. I hope you reviewed the information or joined one of the AAUW webinars. AAUW continues to offer webinars and ZOOM platform meetings which highlight specific resources and links to information that you may utilize and communicate to your branch members.

AAUW National divisions and departments and recent activities and actions are listed below[. View the archived webinars](https://www.aauw.org/resources/events/equity-network/events/) and click on the URLs for in depth information. There is great power in knowledge. Become informed!

**AAUW Archived Webinars:**

* [*State Legislator Roundtable Discussion: Governing During a Crisis*](https://youtu.be/GAHzArjDDTc)

Sen. Tim Knopp (Oregon), Sen. Lori Berman (Florida), Rep. Athena Salman (Arizona), and Rep. Stephanie Howse (Ohio) participated in a roundtable discussion on how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted how they govern, what it means for their non-emergency legislative priorities, and how it has exacerbated or mitigated partisan differences. They’ll also share insight on current conversations about reopening their states for business.

* [*Skype A Scientist creator Pro. Sarah McAnulty: STEM Leadership in Online Resources During COVID-19*](https://youtu.be/h1ll0msn8Ro)

AAUW American Fellowship alumna and University of Connecticut Assistant Research Prof. Sarah McAnulty is a squid biologist and science communicator. She is the founder and executive director of Skype a Scientist, a non-profit organization that connects scientists and teachers around the world for live video calls. The demand for online tools and resources has grown exponentially during COVID-19 as educators and parents struggle with the “new schoolhouse.” In this webinar, Dr. McAnulty’s shares her fascinating career journey and how anyone can use her as a STEM resource.

* [*Social Media Advocacy 101*](https://youtu.be/zNGoT8Ce078)

Social media is an effective tool to extend our reach and mobilize supporters around issues impacting women and girls. In the webinar, AAUW explored best practices and resources for issues-based outreach and “get out the vote” efforts for application during the pandemic and beyond. This introductory workshop is paired with upcoming Voter webinars where we’ll learn how to use social media to best support advocacy efforts.

**AAUW Action Network:** AAUW addressed the following Congressional actions and proposed legislation.

* *The HEROES Act*:
	+ Expanding support for low and moderate-income families to pay their energy bills.
	+ Providing $50 million for environmental justice grants.
	+ Providing $3.6 billion to support safe and secure early voting, vote-by-mail programs, and other election accommodations in all states, ensuring all Americans have a voice.
	+ Supporting essential workers on the front lines of the pandemic.
	+ Extending additional federal unemployment assistance and financial support for laid-off workers and families.
* *Title IX Protections: AAUW Statement on Rollback* <https://www.aauw.org/resources/news/media/press-releases/aauw-statement-on-rolling-back-title-ix-protections/>
	+ CEO Kim Church's op-ed in Newsweek, "The Trump Administration's New Title IX Rules are an Attack on Students-- and #MeToo" (May 11, 2020; <https://www.newsweek.com/trump-administrations-new-title-ix-rules-are-attack-students-metoo-opinion-1503216>)
	+ Note: the full rules may be [found](https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2020/05/19/2020-10512/nondiscrimination-on-the-basis-of-sex-in-education-programs-or-activities-receiving-federal) online. **Click here for a summary brief**  <https://nwlc-ciw49tixgw5lbab.stackpathdns.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Title-IX-Final-Rule-Factsheet-5.19.20-v3.pdf>
* *Gender Equity in Education Act* AAUW Action Network alert called for co-sponsorship and support; <https://www.aauw.org/act/two-minute-activist/geea>)
* *The Voting Rights Advancement* Act (H.R. 4/S. 561)
* *LTE-Letters to the Editor* Members are asked to commemorate the 48th anniversary of Title IX by writing a letter to the editor! Letters to the editor (LTE) in local community papers are an especially effective communications and advocacy tool. They are a great way to educate and energize advocates, reach elected officials, and spread the word about important issues while calling for change.
* *Equality Act:* In early June, the Supreme Court held that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 protects gay, lesbian and transgender employees from discrimination "based on sex." While this is important progress, discrimination remains a persistent problem for LGBTQ people in the United States and the work continues to ensure our civil rights laws include all people.

It is critical that Congress pass the *Equality Act*, to provide explicit protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in a number of key areas.

The *Equality Act* would update our civil rights laws to protect LGBTQ individuals across important areas of life including employment, housing, credit, education, public spaces and services, federally-funded programs and jury service. In addition, the *Equality Act* would add protections against sex discrimination that occurs in public spaces, by providers of goods and services, and by entities that take federal dollars.

**AAUW CEO Kim Churches Webinars:**

* [*To Fulfill These Rights: A Conversation on Education and Equity with Dr. Amaka Okechukwu*](https://youtu.be/V56D02jyq7c)

Dr. Amaka Okechukwu, 2017-18 AAUW American Fellow, Assistant Professor of Sociology at George Mason University and author of “To Fulfill These Rights: Political Struggle Over Affirmative Action and Open Admissions provided attendees with a perspective on affirmative action and equity in education.

* *AAUW National Board Leadership Town Hall for Members*

Two virtual town halls have been held. The Town Halls provide an opportunity ask National Board leaders questions and to learn more of the individual responsibilities of AAUW National’s Board Leadership. Informative meeting discussed how members can follow national leaders as they continue to advance AAUW’s mission through the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

**AAUW Washington Update**

* The Washington Update is back! *(from the AAUW Public Policy & Legal Advocacy Team)*

The world has changed drastically. COVID-19 is devastating our communities, but the dedication of essential workers is inspiring us all. Systemic racism continues to haunt our country, but the unifying cry for racial justice is propelling us forward. And while AAUW has seen significant change with new policy staff, an updated website and a re-imagined Washington Update, we are proud to continue our tradition of providing timely and pertinent information when you need it most.

For more on our recent policy engagement, [explore our letters, comments, testimony and legal briefs](https://click.everyaction.com/k/18185519/220078638/-144342673?nvep=ew0KICAiVGVuYW50VXJpIjogIm5ncHZhbjovL3Zhbi9FQS9FQTAwNS8xLzc2OTU1IiwNCiAgIkRpc3RyaWJ1dGlvblVuaXF1ZUlkIjogIjcwNTU3ZjJkLWU0YzEtZWExMS05YjA1LTAwMTU1ZDAzYmRhMCIsDQogICJFbWFpbEFkZHJlc3MiOiAiam1jZnJlZUBhb2wuY29tIg0KfQ%3D%3D&hmac=nxwsf3N7nzTwg6-o0fOX3FCCjjfiyLpEuSisVx50BxQ=&emci=55d9cae6-9db6-ea11-9b05-00155d039e74&emdi=70557f2d-e4c1-ea11-9b05-00155d03bda0&ceid=929033#Civil-Rights) to learn about AAUW's positions and advocacy efforts.

As I stated in the May update, this information may seem daunting. The public policy issues, activities, and events of AAUW may seem personally less important. Advocacy may not be a priority for you, especially amid so much uncertainty. But sometimes we have to step out of our comfort zone and test our beliefs through activism.

To that end, AAUW has chosen to accelerate the work that is necessary to insure and uphold the civil liberties, education, health and working rights of women and girls. People are listening to AAUW. National leaders are turning to AAUW for opinion and input.

When this world event passes, our community, state and national leaders just might come together to use AAUW ideals to recreate an environment in which cultures of ingenuity, equality, respect, innovation, and common good exist and flourish.

Your homework assignment:

* LTE – write a letter to the editor. Select a topic from this update or one that aligns with [AAUW Public Policy Priorities.](https://www.aauw.org/issues/)
* Begin a [Voter Education campaign using Social Media](https://www.aauwaction.org/voter-education/get-out-the-vote-using-social-media/)
* Begin a [Voter Registration](https://www.aauwaction.org/voter-registration/) campaign – collaborate with the League of Women Voters in your city.
	+ [MN Voter Registration procedures](https://www.sos.state.mn.us/elections-voting/get-involved/voter-registration-drives/)
* Read and use the [AAUW Voter Issue Guide](https://www.aauwaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/AAUW-2020-Voter-Issue-Guide.pdf)
* Contact Federal and State candidates. Interview and administer the 2020 AAUW Action Fund voter guides
	+ [Federal Election Head-to-Head Voter Guide Template](https://www.aauwaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/2020-Federal-Election-Head-to-Head-Voter-Guide-Template.doc)
	+ [State Election Head-to-Head Voter Guide Template](https://www.aauwaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/2020-State-Election-Head-to-Head-Voter-Guide-Template.doc)
* Please communicate activities your branch plans to implement so I can share your plans with other branches.
* Reply to me at: jmcfree@aol.com

**Thanks for all you do.**

**Stay well, stay safe.**

***Together – Moving Forward for AAUW***