



Public Policy News February 2016

Here's the "Issue of the Month" plus other news—please share with your branch members.

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Equal Pay: Moving Forward

The inaction of Congress has shifted the focus on equal pay legislation to the states and local governments. The issue hasn't gone away—women are still paid 79 percent of men's median earnings—but the battlegrounds are now in state capitols and city halls.

AAUW's publication, *The Simple Truth about the Gender Pay Gap*, shows where we stand in Ohio. It gives us the ratios of men's to women's earnings by congressional district. The percentages of difference range from 70.3% to 81.5%, but because the districts are so gerrymandered, it's difficult to pinpoint just where the lower-paying jobs are. We do have, however, a state road map for achieving equity and it begins with member engagement.

Here's what we can do to promote pay equity and prepare for Equal Pay Day on April 12:

- Educate your branch members. Download AAUW's **Quick Facts on the Gender Pay Gap** and share it with branch members.
- Ask your elected officials to proclaim Equal Pay Day.
- Send a letter to the editor about equal pay.
- Be sure your members are signed up for the Two-Minute Activist for legislative action alerts.
- Learn about salary negotiating skills; sponsor a \$tart \$mart workshop on your local campus.

Note that Ohio's legislative efforts have had no success. Two bills this session, House Bill 330, Equal Pay Certificate, that would require state contractors to certify that employees are paid equally; and House Bill 385, that would create a Gender Pay Disparity Task Force, have not been scheduled for any hearings since their introduction. House Bill 330 is in the House State Government Committee; its chair is Rep. Ron Maag, 614-644-6023. House Bill 385 is in the House Community and Family Advancement Committee; its chair is Rep. Tim Deerickson, 614-644-5094. Give them a call and ask them to schedule hearings on these bills.

Pay equity is an issue of economic justice. It's been an issue for AAUW since 1913. The pay gap isn't completely explained away by personal choices, gaps in participation in the work force, or differences in college majors. Pay equity is about economic security during a person's work life and in retirement, and we need to engage in the fight.

Update on Planned Parenthood Defunding

Despite compelling testimony from individuals and organizations, the Ohio Senate approved House Bill 294, designed to defund Planned Parenthood of \$1.3 million that has been used for women's health care and sex education—never for abortions. (While the House and Senate had passed identical bills, the House bill was selected to move forward, and has now been passed by the Senate by a vote of 22 to eight. However, it was amended by the Senate, so it must now go back to the House for concurrence with the amendment.)

The animosity toward Planned Parenthood was fueled by the video selectively edited to imply that Planned Parenthood was selling fetal body parts. Although courts have vindicated Planned Parenthood and actually handed down indictments to the producers of the video, Ohio legislators chose to ignore that, and continue the punitive action against Planned Parenthood.

I testified that AAUW supports Planned Parenthood as a provider of a wide range of services vital to women's health, including birth control, cervical cancer screenings, STD testing and treatment, and sex education. For many low-income women, Planned Parenthood is a trusted source of comprehensive health care. Our next step is to call the governor's office and request that the governor veto this bill. That number is 614-466-3555.

Plans for Legislative Event April 20

A coalition of women's organizations, led by ACTION OHIO Coalition for Battered Women, will hold an event on Wednesday, April 20, highlighting policy issues and legislation affecting women. The event will feature panels of legislators discussing the issues relating to pay equity, domestic violence, and women's health, including responses to the current heroin epidemic. Registration information will be available soon; cost will be minimal. AAUW members are encouraged to gather for lunch and follow up the discussions with visits to their legislators or attendance at a House or Senate session.

Monthly Lobbying Opportunity

If you've ever wanted to try your hand at lobbying—to visit the Statehouse and meet some of the legislators-- here's a great opportunity. Susan Bader, a former AAUW public policy chair now active in Ohio NOW, is leading small groups of individuals in calling on legislators to support an issue or express an opinion on legislation. Susan is meeting on the second Wednesday of the month at 12:30 PM in the lower level of the Statehouse in front of the cafeteria. The next date will be February 9—hope to see you there. Let's put our new state brochures to use!

Prep for Elections

This is a reminder that the last day to register to vote in the primary or to update your registration is February 16. Absentee voting starts on February 17. Be sure your members are registered and that their registration is up to date. The primary will be March 15. To access the AAUW materials for voter engagement, go to www.aauwaction.org.

I encourage your comments—please email me at kgraauw@yahoo.com.

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