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**Public Policy News**

**November 2016**

***A quick note on election protection: Anyone encountering a problem voting early or on election day can call the Election Protection hotline, 866-OUR-VOTE ( 866-687-8683), staffed by the Lawyers’
Committee for Civil Rights.***

***Please be aware that the potential for a “rigged” election is next to zero. The Ohio Voter Rights Coalition reassures voters that Ohio’s many layers of safeguards built into the voting process insure that it is fair and accurate. Voters with concerns can call the hotline number above.***

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**Reviving Civility**

It’s been a long and contentious election season, one that has split families and friends. Somehow, we need to find ways to come together, find common ground, and heal our divisions. I’ve mentioned the National Institute for Civil Discourse before; the institute notes that incivility in America has reached epidemic proportions and makes the case that our democracy depends on civil behavior. Now you can find a program there that encourages citizens to adopt standards of conduct and offers a downloadable toolkit with concrete steps for helping to revive civility in our campaigns and our everyday lives. Standards of conduct are also suggested for candidates and the media. You can find this at [www.nicd.arizona.edu/revivecivility](http://www.nicd.arizona.edu/revivecivility). AAUW members are generally models of civil behavior; the toolkits can help us to encourage others to be civil as well.

**Legislative Update: Lame Duck**

The General Assembly will be returning to the Statehouse after the election with a limited agenda. (All bills not enacted by the end of the year will die; any bill still requiring action will have to be reintroduced in the new session starting in January.) Because the Constitutional Modernization Commission has been slow to come to agreement on a congressional redistricting amendment, we can expect a major push from advocates for action by the legislature. We’re looking at an amendment similar to that adopted last year that will change the redistricting process for the General Assembly.

It’s also likely that there will be a push to pass the 20-week abortion ban, Senate Bill 127. It passed the Senate in 2015 and has been sitting in the House Community and Family Advancement Committee. Opponents argue that the bill does not provide enough exceptions, including for rape and incest. The American Gynecological and Obstetrical Society and the American Medical Association oppose the bill because it places limitations on treatment for serious conditions. Ohio Right to Life is the major proponent of the bill.

Two bills that were highlighted at the *Women United for Change* event last April are targeted for action by advocates: House Bill 362, which would increase the penalties for strangulation in domestic violence cases and House Bill 392, which would authorize protection orders against intimate partners. Both bills have passed the House without any opposition and are awaiting action in the Senate Criminal Justice Committee. You’ll hear more about these as details become known.

**Charter Schools: ECOT Revelations**

The Electronic Classroom of Tomorrow (ECOT), already involved in a state lawsuit in which it could lose millions of dollars, is now faced with more evidence that its students are not logging in for classroom work. The *Columbus Dispatch* has reported that in a sample of 699 students, as many as 70% missed so many unexcused days that they would be truant under state law. Of the sample, the median student missed 30 school days last school year. Regardless, ECOT has billed the state for more than double the actual time students spent in class. Even worse, ECOT received F’s on the most recent state report cards, meeting only one of 28 standards in math, reading and other subjects by grade level.

**Gender BY Us Toolkits**

The Women’s Fund of Central Ohio has a project for us. Similar to AAUW’s program in a box, the organization has prepared toolkits that encourage conversations on gender norms. Noting that gender norms are the root of many issues facing women and men and that the expectations society has for the behavior of women and girls impacts women’s economic self-sufficiency, the Women’s Fund is asking groups and individuals to participate in small group discussions using the toolkit. The goal is to create positive change by raising awareness about the impact of gender norms. You can download the toolkit at [www.womensfundcentralohio.org/gender-by-us](http://www.womensfundcentralohio.org/gender-by-us). If you have questions, the email address is genderbyus@womensfundchentralohio.org.

**Election Activities Feedback**

How did your branch respond to the challenges of this election? Did you endorse a candidate for the state school board? Did you distribute the AAUW voting records? Did you participate in candidate forums and were your questions answered? Please give us your feedback—email me at kgraauw@yahoo.com . We need to know what works for you to be better prepared for the next election. Your comments on other activities are welcome as well.

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