

It is Public Policy time! Here's AAUW of Oregon's Agenda:

1. Ballot Measures – Take Action: Vote NO on Measure 103, 104 and 106!!

When you receive your Voters' Pamphlet (Oct 10-12), you may notice AAUW of OR is listed as a signatory to the "NO" statements regarding these three Ballot Measures. It is important that you, your Branch and your community are informed about what these Ballot Measures are all about, particularly as there is a lot of mis-information circulating about them. So, I suggest you take action now: sponsor a Forum, community event or Branch meeting about the Measures!

Here is a description of these Ballot Measures and why we oppose them. I've not placed them in numerical order because our very first and highest priority is to defeat Measure 106.

NO to Ballot Measure 106 –

It would bar public funding for abortions, which not only restricts reproductive freedom and access to the full spectrum of reproductive services for those who receive coverage through the Oregon Health Plan, but public employees as well. If this Measure is passed, it is only the first step down the road to complete eradication of the right to reproductive choice.

NO to Ballot Measure 104 –

It would extend the requirement for a 3/5ths majority vote in both the House and Senate in order to enact tax exemptions, credits and deductions. Right now, a 3/5ths supermajority vote is required to raise revenue, i.e. taxes, and that provision will remain as is. The primary reason we oppose this Measure is that it just does not make sense to mandate fiscal policy via a Constitutional amendment. By focusing attention on each and every legislative vote, it also fosters the winner-take-all, hyper-partisan approach that our political parties feel they must adopt in order to enact their platforms. Even more importantly, we do not need to reduce funding for much needed educational, health care, social services, law enforcement and other services.

NO to Ballot Measure 103 –

It would prohibit state and local governments from enacting taxes on "groceries." The Measure is a remedy in search of a problem — there is no effort to impose sales taxes in general or sales taxes on groceries. "Groceries" are defined as "any raw or processed food or beverage intended for human consumption except alcoholic beverages, marijuana products, and tobacco products." The Measure also enshrines a special interest into a Constitutionally mandated loophole, which is not a good way to govern and to manage state budgets. The main group pushing this Measure are manufacturers of sugary drinks and sodas. They want to counter a growing movement for cities to ban such products.

2. AAUW of OR Action Regarding Allegations of Sexual Harassment at our State Capitol

As you are likely aware, on August 1st the Commissioner of the Bureau of Labor and Industries, Brad Avakian, filed a BOLI complaint charging that legislative leaders in Salem created a hostile environment in which complaints of sexual harassment were ignored, underplayed or buried at the Capitol. House Speaker Tina Kotek and Senate President Peter Courtney have denied the

allegations, pointing to the fact that while “it does not have all the answers,” it had “been working collaboratively with BOLI since the end of last year on reviewing its training, personnel rules, and workplace practice” and had already requested the Oregon Law Commission to conduct a review of its practices regarding harassment at the legislature. Here is a link to the official complaint and response: <https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/lc/Pages/BOLI-Complaint.aspx> .

In response to this situation, our State Public Policy Committee determined that we needed to express our sincere concerns about these charges and to do all we could to ensure that the Capitol remedied these problems as soon as possible. In my capacity as State Public Policy Chair I am therefore attending the Oregon Law Commission Workgroup hearings which will be making recommendations about sexual harassment policies and procedures at the Capitol. I have also recently met with legislative representatives, including Speaker Kotek, and other coalition partners. We wish to ensure that this process take place expeditiously and transparently.

3. increased Funding for Title IX enforcement in Oregon Schools

AAUW of OR is making some real progress in building legislative support for adding funds to the budget of the Oregon Department of Education which will be dedicated to Title IX enforcement / compliance, sexual bullying / harassment and gender discrimination in Oregon schools. As you have heard me say before, having only one one-quarter employee charged with the responsibility for doing this work in all Oregon’s schools is simply unacceptable. Acting on this premise, a number of AAUW of OR members have testified at Listening Tour hearings held by the Joint Committee on Student Success: Wanda Rafferty (Baker), Pat Hines (Wallowa County); Pat Squire and Robi Ingram Rich (Lake Oswego), Joyce Zook and Delores Milnarczyk (Salem); Gayle Clason and Sherry Schroeder (Medford); Barbara Paulson (Grants Pass); Barb Ternus (Hillsboro-Forest Grove), Trish Garner (Portland). Next up are hearings in Redmond (Sept 13), Portland (Sept 27) and Coos Bay (Oct 10). These witnesses have done an invaluable service because as a result of their testimony, Committee legislators now spontaneously give favorable “I agree” nods when they hear “I’m a member of AAUW of OR

I am also hopeful that legislative support for this issue will not only be bipartisan but bicameral as well. Budget matters are usually hammered out at the end of the legislative Session, so stay tuned!!

4. Status of Other Legislative Priorities

Although the legislature does not formally begin until January, legislators need to have requested the Legislative Counsel’s Office to draft their proposed measures by September 28th. As you can see, legislators are therefore not only busy with elections but also nailing down their legislative priorities. Other than the Title IX issue mentioned above, our priorities at this point include: banning non-disclosure and no re-hire provisions in sexual harassment settlements, increasing the time within which victims can file lawsuits regarding sexual harassment, allowing lawsuits to be filed against harassers — as opposed to the business where they work, and paid family and medical leave. I am hoping that we will also see some legislation that strengthens the laws against age discrimination and tackles the high prices of medications, but I can’t promise that at this moment.

We continue to be active in the Oregon Women’s Equity Coalition, the Health and Human Services Coalition, Allies for a Healthier Oregon, the TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) Alliance and the Earned Income Tax Credit Coalition. Lots to do!!

5. All politics is local — What is your Branch doing to empower women and girls?

Please let me know what your Branch is doing about public policy in your community — big or small, whether you have an official Public Policy Chair or Committee or not. Our State Vice Chair of Public Policy Shilpi Banerjee has updated our Equal Pay Toolkit to reflect changes adopted by the Bureau of Labor and Industries. The updated Toolkit is available via our website - <https://aauw-or.aauw.net/oregon-equal-pay-tool-kit/>. And while I'm at it — I was also asked and in fact participated in the BOLI administrative rule-making process regarding Equal Pay. It was quite interesting! Here is what I'm talking about:

ANY IDEAS —

Is there an area or group in your town or an adjacent town that might not be getting the word about Equal Pay? Consider engaging with that community by sponsoring a program. You never know what magic may transpire!!

6. Conclusion

Hope this Update is helpful and inspires you to become more involved with Public Policy!

Best,

Trish

*Trish Garner
State Public Policy Chair, AAUW of OR
Member National Public Policy Committee, AAUW*