



Voter Guide



Focusing on the Ohio General Assembly, 132nd Session

This voter guide provides nonpartisan information about legislation enacted and pending in the Ohio General Assembly, information on priority issues and AAUW positions affecting women and girls, and information on early voting, absentee ballots, and other voting resources.

AAUW OF OHIO CARES

AAUW Ohio is the state arm of the national organization founded in 1881 and known for more than a century by its full name—the American Association of University Women. Our public policy program underscores AAUW’s mission of advancing equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, philanthropy and research and speaks to women’s needs, aspirations and concerns across the life span.

Both AAUW and the AAUW Action Fund encourage women voters to get involved in the political process and to better understand the impact that legislative action can have on their lives and those of the people they love. AAUW wants to ensure that every woman is registered to vote and has the information she needs to cast her ballot. The most powerful way to affect real change is at the polls.

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All 99 representatives and 17 of the 33 senators will be elected on November 6. To find your representative and district, go to <http://www.ohiohouse.gov> and insert your zip code on the left. The senators to be elected are running in odd-numbered districts. To find your senator, go to <http://www.ohiosenate.gov>. AAUW Ohio encourages you to communicate with your representative and senator about your position especially on the bills described under the “Pending” heading below.



OVERVIEW

Few bills that pertain to AAUW issues were passed by the General Assembly before the summer recess. The recess is expected to last until after the November 6 election when several controversial bills will undoubtedly be up for consideration in the lame duck session. Any bill not passed by the end of the year automatically dies and would have to be reintroduced in the new session beginning in January.

There was general agreement on bills passed that concerned AAUW. In rare bipartisanship, both major parties supported these bills:

- **Senate Bill 4:** Allows for the expungement of criminal charges against victims of human trafficking whose crimes were committed as a result of being trafficked. (This allows victims to apply for jobs and housing without a criminal record, so that they can get on with their lives.)
- **House Bill 1:** Allows civil protection orders to be issued to protect victims of violence in dating relationships. (Previously, only spouses could be protected).
- **House Bill 21 and House Bill 87:** Provides for community (charter) school enrollment verification and provides that public money returned to the state as a result of a finding for recovery against a community school would go back to the school district where the funds originated. (These bills are a partial response to the Electronic Classroom of Tomorrow (ECOT) debacle. The state was paying ECOT for students who were not actually participating in instruction.)
- **Senate Joint Resolution 5:** Placed the congressional redistricting amendment on the May ballot. (The amendment passed easily and will become effective after the 2020 census, unless the court decides in favor of the League of Women Voters of Ohio lawsuit, which asks that the amendment be applied to the 2020 election.) It will end the worst of gerrymandering for the election of representatives to Congress.

The differences in legislative philosophies and positions were far more pronounced in the votes on the budget bill for Fiscal Years 2018-19 (**House Bill 49**). The vote for passage of the budget was 59-40 in the House and 24-8 in the Senate, breaking down largely on party lines with Republicans in the majority. Attempts were made to limit Medicaid expansion to cover optional eligible groups but were vetoed by the governor. Funding for K-12 education was increased by only 2.7 percent over the last budget, which, when adjusted for inflation, leaves districts with less aid than in the previous budget. In fact, a recent study shows that despite increases in state funding, in the past ten years funding has fallen nearly two percent below inflation. School transportation funding was cut, further shortchanging school districts. Additionally, almost \$2 billion was taken from local districts to fund charter schools although their students tend to perform less well than students in traditional public schools. (You can discover the financial impact of charter schools on your local school district at www.knowyourcharter.com.) And Ohio's five voucher programs continue to grow, with an allocation near \$600 million for the biennium.

Higher education funding was insufficient as well. SSI, the State Share of Instruction, was increased by 0.11 percent, only \$2 million over the biennium, much less than the 4.5 percent (\$180 million) requested by the Inter-University Council of Ohio in order to maintain current quality and services.

The budget bill also included \$600,000 for the Ohio Parenting and Pregnancy Program, which funds crisis pregnancy centers. These centers don't measure up to AAUW standards for safe, accessible, affordable and comprehensive family planning and reproductive health services. The money comes from the federal TANF grant, which is intended to be used for assistance to families in deep poverty, and not for providing misleading and inaccurate information to pregnant women and girls.

PENDING BILLS

The lame duck session of the legislature, so called because those who will be out of office at the end of December have their last chance to be effective, could be highly controversial. Unfinished business could include several bills that AAUW would oppose; any bills not enacted die at the end of the session. Here are bills to watch for and contact your legislator about:

- **HB 228 and SB 180:** These are “stand your ground” proposals that would expand the locations at which a person has no duty to retreat before the use of deadly force in self-defense. Some such situations have led to an innocent person being killed. ***AAUW supports gun violence prevention and fears that these bills would not lessen the threat of violence.***
- **HB 258:** The so-called “heartbeat bill” would generally prohibit an abortion of a fetus with a detectable heartbeat (usually after six weeks, often before a woman knows she is pregnant). This bill has been voted out of committee in the House and could come up quickly for a floor vote. Governor Kasich vetoed a similar bill in 2016. ***AAUW has testified against similar bills in past sessions based on its position supporting the protection of reproductive rights, and opposes this bill as well.***
- **SB 145:** This bill, known as the “abortion method ban,” would ban a medical procedure known as “D&E” (dilation and evacuation) after twelve weeks’ gestation. The procedure is considered safer than medication-assisted abortions in the second trimester, but the bill’s sponsor’s intent is to override medical opinion and allow the legislature to make policy for the state of Ohio. The bill passed the Senate and is being heard in House committee. ***AAUW opposes the bill based on its position supporting the protection of reproductive rights.***
- **HB 512:** In a proposed major overhaul of education functions, this bill would consolidate most of the Department of Education, all of the Department of Higher Education and the Governor’s Office of Workforce Development in a new agency controlled by the governor, to be called the Department of Learning and Achievement. The rationale given is to streamline the oversight of primary, secondary, and postsecondary education, improve accountability and communications, and better prepare students for the workforce.

The bill would abolish the Board of Regents and transfer many of the functions of the State Board of Education to the new department. (The State Board of Education is embedded in the Ohio constitution and cannot be abolished without amending the constitution, but it would retain only minimal functions.)

The bill has generated intense controversy. Organizations opposing HB 512 are largely the defenders of traditional public education and include the State Board of Education, groups representing local school boards and administrators and teachers. Key objections are to the creation of a “mega-department of education,” too much emphasis on job readiness, and potential pendulum swings in education policy as the result of political influence and changes in administration. Those supporting the bill are largely business groups including the Ohio Chamber of Commerce and local career-technical education officials. ***AAUW, a strong supporter of public education, agrees that students need to be prepared for the workforce, but has concerns about the loss of the policy-making and executive functions of the Board of Education, which especially would limit the ability of those advocating for the most disadvantaged students to secure improvements in the way these children are educated.***

PENDING BILLS

On the other hand, several bills that AAUW can support await action. Because most of them lack bipartisan support, they are not likely to advance, but it's important to note that they have been introduced and likely would receive more favorable attention with a different legislature.

- Wage Inequality: **HB 180**, the Ohio Equal Pay Act, would require pay equity of contractors with state agencies, and would prohibit employers from retaliating against employees who discuss wages with other employees. **HB 403** would create a Gender Pay Disparity Task Force to determine the extent of pay disparity in Ohio, identify the causes, and develop recommendations to address the issue. **SB 174** would strengthen state laws to help protect against wage discrimination. ***AAUW believes that pay equity and equal opportunity are a matter of simple fairness; clear regulations and strong enforcement are needed to protect employees and assist employers in following the law.***
- Human Trafficking: **HB 461** would bring Ohio's law into agreement with federal law, which defines all minors under 18 as victims and entitled to the same legal protections. Currently in Ohio, 16- and 17-year-olds are treated differently than younger victims. By removing the age distinction, this bill also simplifies the prosecution of traffickers. ***AAUW believes in the protection of victims, including provisions that cover safe harbor, victim assistance, civil remedies, the ability to vacate convictions for survivors, and strict hotline posting requirements.***
- Reproductive Rights: **HB 234** would criminalize impeding access to reproductive health care facilities by employees and patients, essentially to protect them from violence and intimidation. ***AAUW supports choice in the determination of one's reproductive life and increased access to health care and family planning services. AAUW also advocates for freedom from violence and the fear of violence.***



QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES—What you can do now

Who will represent AAUW's values? It's important to ask the candidates the tough questions to know where they stand before you vote. Be sure to make your voice heard, whether you're hosting or attending a candidate forum, to build awareness not only for yourself but for other attendees. Here are some suggested questions that relate to AAUW positions. Detailed information on AAUW's positions can be found at: <https://www.aauw.org/resource/principles-and-priorities/>. See also "How to Host a Candidate Forum" at: <https://www.aauw.org/resource/how-to-candidate-forum/>.

Economic security: How would you address the pay gap between men and women? Do you support legislation to provide paid sick days and family leave?

Education: Do you support adequate funding for quality public education? What is your position on charter schools? What is your position on voucher programs?

Higher Education: How would you help to make college more affordable and reduce college debt for students? Do you support student loan forgiveness programs? What are your views on Title IX enforcement?

Reproductive Rights: Do you support public funding for family planning services and reproductive health care? Do you support legislation that protects individuals' access to affordable quality reproductive health care, including abortion care?

Violence Prevention: What steps would you take to prevent gun violence? Do you support increasing resources for prevention efforts to deter sexual harassment and assault?



VOTING INFORMATION

Election Calendar

- **Register to vote.** Register by **October 9, 2018** to vote on **Tuesday, November 6, 2018**. Registration forms are available in many places, including your county Board of Elections, libraries, high schools or vocational schools, deputy registrar offices, and many state service agencies. You may also ask the Secretary of State or the county Board of Elections to mail you an application.
- **Check your registration.** If you are already registered but have not voted in recent elections, check to be sure you are still registered. You can do this online at www.MyOhioVote.com or by calling your county Board of Elections. If you have changed your address or your name since you last voted, you will need to update your registration. You can do this by filling out a new registration form. You can also change your address online at the Secretary of State's website, www.sos.state.oh.us, if you have an Ohio driver's license or state identification card.
- **Know your polling place.** If you do not know where to vote, call your county Board of Elections or go online. The www.MyOhioVote.com website can also give you that information. Forms of ID currently accepted in Ohio include: Ohio driver's license, military card, bank statement, and a utility bill that includes your name and current address. Student ID is not accepted.
- **Vote early in person or absentee.** Ohio residents may vote absentee for any reason, either by mail or in person. Absentee voting begins on **October 10**. Voters who might have difficulty getting to the polls during open hours (6:30 AM to 7:30 PM) may want to vote absentee. Absentee ballot applications were mailed to all registered voters on August 31 by the Secretary of State. If you choose to vote by mail, you must complete the application and return it to your county board of elections. Your ballot will be mailed to you after October 10 and its return must be postmarked by **November 5**. You may also drop off an absentee ballot at your county board of elections on **November 6** until 7:30 PM. Days and hours for early in-person voting and other more detailed information are available on the Secretary of State's website, www.sos.state.oh.us.



OTHER RESOURCES

Sources of information about specific candidates include:

- AAUW Action Fund: Congressional Voting Record, also, 2018 Voter Guide for Candidates for Ohio U.S. Senate, www.aauwaction.org/voter-education
- How to Organize a Candidate Forum, www.aauw.org/resource
- The League of Women Voters online voter guide, www.VOTE411.org; create your own sample ballot
- Ohio judicial candidates' online voter guide, www.JudicialVotesCount.org
- The Ohio Women's Public Policy Network, 132nd General Assembly Women's Economic Security Scorecard, www.womenspublicpolicynetwork.org

Contacts, Websites:

Find information about AAUW Ohio, including news and events in local branches at <https://aauw-oh.aauw.net> and www.facebook.com/AAUWOhio.

Find information on national programs and advocacy resources at www.aauw.org.

