

Public Policy Report
Tar Heel Branch Annual Meeting

PRIOR TO 2013

Efforts continued to engage more AAUW NC branch members in public policy (PP) advocacy efforts to support the AAUW mission.

Several branches participated in a pilot program focusing on PP advocacy in five broad issue areas. At the conclusion of the pilot program, participating branches indicated that too many issues were trying to be monitored during the long session of the General Assembly. In addition, participants said AAUW NC was ineffective in getting the message out across the state when immediate action was needed on various bills.

2013-2014

Based on this feedback from the pilot, AAUW formed a PP Leadership team at the state level before the NC General Assembly convened in 2013 for a long session. The leadership team recommended that just four issue areas be monitored: Education, Health, Economic Security and Social Justice.

To address the concern with the lack of timely PP information, AAUW NC signed onto CQ StateTrack, a public policy tool which allowed AAUW staff in Washington to work with our AAUW NC state leaders to customize and track North Carolina legislation included as AAUW NC priorities. Using this system provided branch members with access to more up-to-date information on legislative activity during the last long session of the General Assembly.

The Report Card Project was also completed in 2014. The project was designed as a tool to open conversations and educate AAUW members and the public about how North Carolina legislators voted on AAUW issues. The report card compiled the voting records in both the NC House and Senate on issues specific to AAUW NC PP priorities. The report card was distributed at the 2014 AAUW NC Annual Meeting.

2015 UPDATE

Soon to be introduced during this 2015 General Assembly session (begun in January 2015) is a state program that is similar to the national AAUW program called "Two Minute Activist." Branch members will have instant access to their legislators' information (name, email address, etc.), as well as sample bullet points to include in a message to their elected officials. A click on the "Two Minute Activist" "SEND" button relays the message instantly.

An AAUW NC PP committee is taking responsibility for overseeing and reporting on state legislative issues as they emerge in 2015. Denny McGuire is chairing this committee. Also included on the committee are Mary Peterson, Diana Gray and Karla Atkinson. (All

are members of the THB). Three issue areas will be monitored during this long session, using the CQ StateTrack system.

The list of 2015 legislative priorities, endorsed by branch public policy chairs and presidents, is attached to this report. This list was forwarded to coalition partner North Carolina Women United to support the development of the Woman's Legislative Agenda for 2015. The agenda was the centerpiece for personal conversations with legislators on Women's Advocacy Day on February 24, 2015.

TAR HEEL BRANCH INVOLVEMENT IN PUBLIC POLICY

Nancy Shoemaker, one of the original founding members of the THB, has been instrumental in developing the design of the AAUW NC PP advocacy plan, providing especially technical assistance for e-advocacy. Shoemaker oversees and maintains the AAUW NC PP lists; consults with national AAUW staff to refine the CQ StateTrack system for North Carolina; and regularly updates the AAUW NC web site (www.aauwnc.org.) with PP advocacy information.

Denny McGuire (Raleigh/Wake and THB) is now managing the content of CQ StateTrack for AAUW NC and will be asking AAUW NC members to notify her to delete bills that don't really fit our criteria. Diana Gray (Winston Salem and THB) is assisting Denny. If you know of bills that you feel should be on the list but aren't, please let Denny know: <mailto:jmcguire11@nc.rr.com>

What remains in place from the pilot design of the AAUW NC PP advocacy plan is the opportunity for branch members sign up on one or both "notification" email lists. THB members can get timely background information on legislative issues by writing to pp-info@lists.aauwnc.org. They can also get action bulletins/alerts, asking them to contact their legislators, by subscribing to <http://lists.aauwnc.org/listinfo.cgi/pp-alerts-aauwnc.org> Some THB members are registered on these lists. These and other THB members continue to bring expertise to crafting position statements on legislative issues, writing letters to the editor, building coalitions, and participating in Moral Mondays.

THB members are encouraged to stay on top of AAUW priority issues as the 2015 long session continues. The CQ State Track system is accessible at <http://www.aauwnc.org/about/advocacy/status-of-bills-of-interest-to-aauw-nc>. Bookmark this site to keep informed of what's happening on issues central to the mission of AAUW and prioritized by AAUW NC.

Submitted by:

Karla Atkinson (Brevard/THB Board member)
AAUW NC Public Policy Committee

AAUW NC Public Policy Priorities
January 20, 2015

Economic Self Sufficiency

- **Raise the minimum wage**– *Support legislation bringing the minimum wage in line with the current economy.*
- **Close the gender pay gap** - *Promote legislation supporting equal pay policies and practices*

Education

- **Increase support for quality, locally governed public education** – *Support legislation restoring recent funding cuts to public education in North Carolina; develop teacher salary schedules which reward professional development and longevity.*
- **Promote educational opportunities for girls and women** – *Support funding for Title IX and STEM programs*

Health Care

- **Expand Medicaid** – *Support action to accept new federal Medicaid funds to expand insurance coverage to low-income North Carolinians.*