

2016 Key Issue Briefs



Add the Words

Position: Support adding the words “sexual orientation and gender identity” to the Idaho Human Rights Act

Status: Members attended a rally on January 16. Senators Cherie Buckner-Webb and Grant Burgoyne have introduced legislation to add the words to the Idaho Human Rights Act!

Final Outcome: View [Senate Bill 1196 here](#). Sadly the bill failed to get a hearing. Link to the [Add the Words campaign](#) to learn next steps.



In 2015 legislators suggested that they might seek a compromise bill to please ‘religious freedom’ supporters while providing some protection for LGBT Idahoans, so stay tuned to see what develops.

Please [write your legislators](#) and respectfully urge them NOT to compromise on a civil rights issue. AAUW continues to strongly support adding the words 'sexual orientation and gender identity' to the Idaho Human Rights Act.

Close the Gap: Healthy Idaho Plan

Position: Support

Status/Outcome: On Thursday March 17, 2016 AAUW members attended a print hearing for two new bills in RS form by Rep. John Vander Woude. There was no hearing, no discussion, and the action was postponed indefinitely. Legislators failed to agree on any compromise, thus leaving 78,000 Idahoans in the coverage gap for another year.

Background: Stalled in 2015. In 2016 two bills, [SB1204](#) and [SB1205](#) (Healthy Idaho Plan), have been proposed to address the issue. On January 26, 2016, Health and Welfare Director Armstrong unveiled the Primary Care Access Program (PCAP), an attempt to get those in the gap some services without expanding Medicaid and accepting federal dollars. Unfortunately, coverage under the PCAP program was extremely limited. On February 15, 2016, the House Health and Welfare Committee failed to pass the Governor's PCAP plan.

Senator Schmidt's bill related to the Healthy Idaho Plan/Close the Gap (SB 1205) was heard in a joint House and Senate Health and Welfare Committee hearing February 12, 2016. Here is a snippet from [AAUW testimony provided by Sylvia Chariton](#).

The 78,000 hard-working Idahoans that currently fall into the gap - earning too little to qualify for Medicaid and too much to qualify for a health care subsidy - deserve health care coverage. Passage of the Healthy Idaho Plan is the morally and fiscally responsible path to take.

AAUW Idaho has consistently supported closing Idaho's coverage gap and eliminating current county and state medical indigent programs by employing the Healthy Idaho Plan. By accepting Idaho's share of available federal funds, individuals who are 100-138% of the federal poverty level would be allowed to use these federal funds to purchase private coverage.

Too many Idahoans, especially women, are having a difficult time making ends meet despite a full-time job. That's why they need assistance to obtain health insurance coverage for themselves & their families. Review polling data about the [Healthy Idaho Plan here](#).

- Bring Idaho dollars back to the state for a much needed program.
- Relieve counties of the burden of covering uninsured Idahoans.
- Increase women and children's access to health care.

Early Learning

Position: Support [HB 451](#) and [HB 526](#)

Status/Outcome: House Bills 451 and 526 were signed into law by Governor Otter on March 23.

Background: In 2015, Representatives Pat McDonald and Christy Perry introduced a bill that would have introduced a pilot program for early learning education. The bill quietly faded away. Per an AP report in the *Idaho Statesman*:

An Idaho House panel is considering allowing a small group of public schools to offer voluntary preschool classes. The House Education Committee introduced the plan Monday. The proposal would allow roughly 100 children who are at least four years old to attend half-time classes.

Republican Rep. Patrick McDonald from Boise says that children with better reading and math scores in elementary school are more likely to graduate high school and avoid criminal activity.

The three-year plan is slated to cost \$1.4 million — taxpayers would fund roughly half.

AAUW supports early childhood education including preschool learning opportunities. A solid foundation ensures life-long success for Idaho students. [Rep. Hy Kloc and allies have been working on this issue](#) for four years.

Education Funding and Teacher Salaries

Position: Support funding a strong public education system and Increased teacher salaries

Status/Outcome: The governors State of the State address would restore funding to 2009 rates, despite increases in student populations.

Another bill emerged during the session that raised constitutional concerns, SB 1321, aka the **Bible-in-schools bill**. An amended bill, SB 1342 was passed by the Legislature and sent to Governor Otter, where it was vetoed. Read about the bill [here](#).

Human Trafficking/Sexual Violence Against Women: Rape Test Kit Legislation

Position: Support legislation to reduce incidences and impact of human trafficking and sexual assault. We also join with allies and law enforcement in support of legislation to facilitate rape kit testing.

Status/Outcome: This session, Rep. Melissa Wintrow introduced a successful bill, [HB 528](#), to facilitate the processing of rape kits collected as evidence. Read about the bill's intent in the [Boise Weekly](#). In addition, read the Boise Weekly report about the increase in reported sexual assault on the BSU campus [here](#).

For more AAUW's position on human trafficking, read [AAUW's Quick Facts on Human Trafficking](#).

Planned Parenthood: Protecting Women's Reproductive Rights



Position: Oppose interference in women's private medical decisions

Status/Outcome: Four bills were introduced and tracked:

The first bill, [SB 1349](#), would place a ban on women donating fetal tissue to medical research. This is a practice that Planned Parenthood does not facilitate in Idaho, but the bill is a reaction to last year's debunked and heavily biased videos that led to indictments for the people who filmed them. A ban on fetal tissue research would impact everyone who

depends on life-saving findings and halt studies into Down's syndrome, autism, and schizophrenia. This bill failed.

The second bill, [HB 516](#), requires abortion providers like Planned Parenthood to direct their patients towards limited service pregnancy centers, also known as crisis pregnancy centers. The result would be women going away from real doctors to a facility operating on an agenda with untrained volunteers, delaying access to an abortion and potentially endangering a woman's health. And when it comes to limited service pregnancy centers, it's been well-documented that they engage in deceptive and misleading tactics to convince women not to have abortions, and even lie to women about their own pregnancies. The legislature should be promoting access to real health care for everyone, not looking for ways to drive women to unqualified and deceptive organizations pretending to be health care providers. This bill was signed onto law.

The third bill was [SB 1386](#), to further limit rare second trimester abortions, which are often performed in the most dire circumstances. This bill failed.

Finally, in the final days of the session, [SB 1404aa](#) swept through the legislature and was signed into law.

If the Idaho Legislature is truly concerned with the health and safety of women, it must listen to facts presented by medical experts and health care providers rather than special interest groups focused on furthering their personal religious and moral beliefs.

To learn more about AAUW's position on Reproductive Rights, please read [AAUW's Quick Facts on Reproductive Rights](#)

Minimum Wage

Position: Support an increase in the minimum wage and a living wage for all full-time Idaho workers – Oppose efforts to prohibit local municipalities from increasing the minimum wage

Status/Outcome: Legislation to prohibit local municipalities from increasing the minimum wage passed: it moved rapidly through the Legislature. [HB 463](#) removes local control and prohibits efforts to increase the minimum wage by ballot initiative. This is contrary to the democratic process. The bill passed and became law without the Governor's signature.

Early in the 2016 session, Rep. Mat Erpelding and Sen. Maryanne Jordan were shut down once again by Chairman Sen. Curt McKenzie, who refused to grant a hearing on this legislation in the Senate State Affairs Committee. Read more about the situation in [Betsy Russell's blog](#).

The bill to increase the minimum wage, [House Bill 400](#), was then sent to the House Ways and Means Committee (Chaired by Rep. Christy Perry), where it languished. On March 14 and 16, 2016, advocates attempted to have their voices heard and force a debate on the House floor, but the bill was sent back to committee on a partisan vote — no debate or discussion was allowed.

Idaho workers earn some of the lowest wages nationwide, leaving many working families in poverty. Women, especially, are impacted by the trend towards part-time, low-paying jobs. Idaho can, and must, do better. [Read the poll](#) that shows that Idahoans overwhelmingly support increasing the minimum wage.

Follow progress on the efforts of a coalition spearheaded by [United Vision for Idaho](#) to increase the minimum wage.

STEM

Position: Support legislation to increase STEM education opportunities

Status/Outcome: [SB 1279](#) was signed into law on March 23, and three other STEM bills passed successfully – all will be implemented in the coming year!

Update from **STEM Chair Donna Looze**, from March 1, 2016:

- Career counselors will be funded for 2017 on both the junior and senior high level. This will give students a chance to become aware of all the STEM careers available to them.
- A portal for Career Planning is being developed and will become available to all high school career counselors and students. This should help the state meet its goal of 60% of high school students going on to higher education. Students will be able to explore STEM careers and educational opportunities along with scholarships and grants.
- Senator Nonini presented the STEM Education Fund bill for \$10 million. Motion passed and the bill was sent to print.

- Tim Corder, State Department of Education, addressed the review and revision of the Science Curriculum. There has been so much public input he asked the Committee to reject this bill. He stated it was not the content that was the problem, but the process of how it was arrived at. It should have public hearings. This will be addressed in the future and the bill will be reintroduced again next year.
- HB 370 Relating to Courses of Instruction: Computer Science Initiative has undergone amendments for uniformity. It looks like it is on its way to being passed on to the Legislature for passage.

Other Issues of Interest the AAUW Idaho Lobby Corps will be watching:

Anti-Bullying

Position: Support legislation to prevent bullying

Status: Signed by governor into law in 2015, the bill faced no challenges/revisions during the 2016 session.



Rep. Ilana Rubel speaking at Anti-Bullying bill signing, April 6, 2015

HB 246 ensured that districts, schools, and school personnel have a role in preventing and intervening in bullying should it occur. The intent of this legislation is to make it clear that school personnel are authorized and expected to intervene where they see incidents of bullying to further prevent harm to students and ensure all parties recognize bullying, harassment and intimidation when it occurs.

This legislation also calls for schools to provide ongoing staff training designed to prevent and identify bullying. It spells out a series of graduated consequences, from counseling referrals to expulsion, for students who commit bullying. And the bill requires schools to

report bullying information to the State Department of Education and makes bullying violations an infraction.

AAUW Idaho supports **Ryan's Rainbow Connection**, a nonprofit based in Pocatello. Please visit and like their [Facebook page](#).

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saved September 8, 2016