

2014 was a difficult year for education and civil rights. AAUW members visited the Statehouse in support of Adding the 4 Words (to the Idaho Human Rights Act) again, which failed to receive a hearing. Medicaid redesign was rejected, leaving a large number of Idahoans uninsured. A religious discrimination bill was defeated, which provided protection to people who deny services and employment, based upon their personal religious beliefs, to other people. The bill would enshrine discriminatory measures, thereby negatively impacting women and the LGBT community. In addition, efforts to increase the minimum wage went nowhere.

On the education front, a ‘guns on campus’ bill was signed into law despite the objections of teachers, administrators, community leaders and law enforcement leaders.

AAUW supports a strong public education system with the means to sustain and respect the teaching profession. We support early childhood (pre-K) education. We oppose the diversion of public school funds for private education and vouchers. We oppose tax credits for private schools. Such measures fly in the face of the Idaho Constitution, which specifically prohibits public funding of religious or sectarian schools. AAUW Idaho strongly opposes measures designed to de-fund and eliminate public education in Idaho. Idaho Constitution, Article 9, Section 5 states,

“Neither the legislature nor any county, city, town, township, school district, or other public corporation, shall ever make any appropriation, or pay from any public fund or moneys whatever,... to help support or sustain any school,...controlled by any church, sectarian or religious denomination whatsoever.”

AAUW Idaho supported efforts to implement the Idaho Core Standards. Please [click here](#) to read about AAUW’s stand on Common Core Standards, and visit Boise State Public Radio’s [Ultimate Guide to Common Core in Idaho](#). You may find additional Idaho-specific information at www.idahocorestandards.org.

The Idaho Core Standards are essential to creating an education system that prepares our young people for success in school, work, and life. The Core Standards raise the bar for what Idaho’s students learn in math and English, giving them the ability to think critically, absorb information, draw conclusions and communicate orally and in writing. They give our students the skills to be life-long learners and they give parents peace of mind to know that their children are well-prepared for an ever-changing world.

In 2013, Anne Pasley-Stuart and Gayle Wilde attended education hearings and testified on several bills on behalf of AAUW. Our public policy leaders testified against various charter school bills and a tax credit for private schools, which failed ([House Bill 286](#)). AAUW has not opposed school choice via charter schools in the past, but AAUW Idaho strongly opposes the diversion of limited public school funds from school districts to charter schools. School districts must go to their voters for facilities money, so a school district's levy could fail while a charter school in the same district would receive state funds for facilities.

We also oppose expanding the charter system at a time when education budgets are in peril, which does a disservice to all public schools. Unless the budget grows at a rate equal to the increased need, all Idaho students will eventually lose. Both charter school bills passed ([HB 206](#) and [HB 221](#)).

We monitored bills that would reduce and/or eliminate the funding stream for public schools, and were pleased that the worst of the proposals put out was stopped.

Some other bills we followed during the session:

- [SB 1108](#), the **Voter Initiative law** will tighten the initiative and referenda process, thus circumventing the will of voters. This law makes it more difficult for citizens to undo bad legislation, as Idahoans did so successfully when overturning the disastrous 'Luna Laws.' It is already very difficult to get an initiative or referenda on the ballot and this bill will make it even more difficult for voters to have a voice, especially those in rural districts. This is not democracy. The bill was signed by Governor Otter.
- **Healthcare Insurance Exchange**, [HB 248](#), passed and was signed by Governor Otter. AAUW Idaho supported this bill.
- **Accepting Medicaid Funds/Medicaid Expansion**, [HB 309](#), makes good fiscal sense and is a smarter way to invest in health care that promotes personal accountability. Saying yes will provide better health and economic security for women and families. If Idaho waits just one year to accept the funds, we lose over \$50 million in federal dollars. Unfortunately, companion bills HB 308 (which repeals the CAT Fund) & 309 (which expands Medicaid) will not move forward this year. There was a joint House and Senate Health & Welfare Committee informational session for both bills on Friday, March 22. **No public testimony was taken and legislators could not vote on the bills.** Despite this terrible turn of events, the hearing was an opportunity for legislators to hear from Dept. of Health & Welfare Director Dick Armstrong about the positive fiscal impacts (and improved health care delivery system) of Medicaid expansion. Read Betsy Russell's account of the situation [here](#). A [University of Idaho economist](#) estimates that Idaho's economy would get a \$9.2 billion boost over the next 10 years if Idaho opted for Medicaid expansion this year. This number includes payroll and tax revenue. The state budget would save \$649 million, county property taxpayers would save \$478 million, and the new federal funds coming into the state would generate \$614 million. When we

consider Medicaid expansion, it is important to note that these are not new populations to Idaho. These individuals are in our system now, and we all pay for their care through state and county taxes. **UPDATE:** The bills have been tabled, allowing Republicans time to educate constituents about the benefits of accepting these funds.

- **Add the Words – Amending the Idaho Human Rights Act:** AAUW Idaho supports ongoing efforts to add the words “sexual orientation” and “gender identity” to the Idaho Human Rights Act. The 2013 Legislature offered a moving Senate and House State Affairs Committee informational presentation brought forth by Senator Cherie Buckner-Webb and Representative Grant Burgoyne, but again, no testimony was taken and the effort remains stalled.
- **Human trafficking bills:** Governor Otter commissioned a study of human trafficking in Idaho last spring. This commission met through the summer and presented their findings to the Idaho Criminal Justice Commission last fall. Two bills have passed in the Legislature during its final week.
SB 1060 Closes the gap between victim and buyer for the exchange of anything of value, tangible, intangible when exchanged for sex.
SB 1123 Forfeiture – money will go to pay expenses of the proceedings with the balance going to the victim services account.
- There were numerous **gun and concealed weapons bills:** look under the Weapons subject line on the [Idaho Legislature site](#) for more information.

In 2012, Sylvia Chariton testified against HB 530 and more conscience laws aimed at excluding insurers from covering contraceptives, sterilization and abortion services. AAUW strongly opposes these bills which deny women essential and basic health care, relegating women to second-class citizenship. Gender discrimination has long been practiced by insurers, and these bills make matters worse, making access to all family planning services more difficult. Couched as a religious freedom issue, the rights and conscience of women to responsibly plan their futures has been trumped by the government’s interest in protecting employers and corporations.

The mandatory ultrasound bill, SB 1387, was finally declared dead. AAUW Idaho Co-president Bonnie Pfaff testified against the legislation which would infringe on a woman’s private medical decision. Our public policy leaders are working with allies to stop this type of legislation. The bill would insert politicians into private medical decisions and force women seeking an abortion to have an unnecessary medical procedure. The standard of care in the medical profession needs to remain with doctors, not politicians and special interest groups with an agenda. Currently, government mandated medical procedures are only done on those arrested for criminal offenses or the mentally ill, and neither is required to pay for it.

Other legislation pertaining to **human trafficking and child slavery** was introduced in the Senate and AAUW supported and followed those bills. Chariton also testified in support of **anti-bullying** legislation.

In 2011, Sylvia Chariton (Idaho VP Public Policy) and Gayle Wilde (Boise Branch VP Public Policy) were at the Capitol lobbying on issues of importance to Idaho women, including education funding, the 'conscience' law, and amending the Idaho Human Rights Act to include sexual orientation and gender identity protections.

During the 2010 session, the Idaho Legislature failed to pass House Bill 547, which would have recognized Equal Pay Day every year, with no fiscal impact. On **April 20, 2010**, AAUW Idaho and the [Boise Area Branch](#) joined with the Idaho Women's Network (IWN) and BSU Gender Studies to celebrate Equal Pay Day.

During the 2009 legislative session, Chariton and Special Project Chair [Tina Gospodnetich](#) worked towards passage of a daycare licensing standards bill, which, after years of effort by many groups, successfully passed.

AAUW members worked with Rep. Anne Pasley-Stuart, IWN and others in passage of HCR 23, a resolution to draw attention to pay equity issues in Idaho. HCR 23 proclaimed **April 28, 2009**, "**Equal Pay Day**" in Idaho.