

## ADVOCACY 2015: Bills monitored during the Idaho Legislative Session

AAUW Idaho's Vice President, Public Policy, is [Gayle Wilde](#). Wilde and [Sylvia Chariton](#) served as 2014-15 co-captains of the AAUW Idaho Statehouse Lobby Corps, representing the interests of the 245 members of AAUW Idaho. They led a team of grassroots citizen lobbyists advancing [AAUW Idaho Priority Issues](#) during the 2015 Idaho Legislative Session. The Lobby Corps met January 7, 2015, and decided to focus on these [key issues](#): Add the Words, Education Funding, Early Learning, Medicaid Redesign, and Raising the Minimum Wage.

Governor Otter offered his *State of the State* address on January 12, 2015, signaling the beginning of the Legislative Session. The session was adjourned Sine Die on April 11, 2015, but not without its issues: [SB 1067](#), to fund the state's child support enforcement program, was killed in the 11th hour by House Judiciary and Rules Committee members who feared foreign law supplanting Idaho law (despite assurances from the deputy Attorney General that such fears were unfounded). The House rejected \$16 million for child support enforcement and millions in federal money for low-income aid. Once naysayers were apprised of the damage they had done, Idaho taxpayers were forced to pay for a costly special session to address this critical funding. A special Legislative Session was held on Monday, May 18, 2015. AAUW Idaho President Kathy Scott testified in favor of funding; several Lobby Corps members attended in support of the bill. After a long joint Judiciary and Rules Committee hearing, the measure passed and was sent to both bodies where it succeeded. Governor Otter quickly signed the bill.

### 2015 Key Issue Briefs

#### Add the Words

**Position:** Support

**Status:** Killed in Committee

**Action:** Link to the [Add the Words campaign](#) and engage in critical action.

[House Bill 2](#) was printed and a House State Affairs Committee hearing was held **January 26, 8 a.m., Lincoln Auditorium**. AAUW Lobby Corps Co-captain **Sylvia Chariton testified** for the bill. The [Committee killed the bill](#) on Jan. 29 on a 13-4 party-line vote after listening to the testimony of 190 people — 134 in favor, 54 opposed and two neutral.

**Sylvia Chariton** of the American Association of University Women said her organization strongly supports the law, to protect friends, neighbors and relatives who are gay or transgender. "Do what is right and just for these people," she said. Read testimony reports and find Sylvia's quote at 8:11 a.m. blog spot: <http://www.spokesman.com/blogs/boise/>



The Legislature suggested that they may 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.

## Anti-Bullying

**Position:** Support legislation to prevent bullying

**Status:** Signed by governor into law



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

HB 246 will ensure 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](#).

## Education Funding and Teacher Salaries

**Position:** Support Education Funding and Increased Teacher Salaries

**Status:** [HB 222](#) died in the House Education Committee 3/11. A new, third bill, [HB 296](#), received broad support and was signed into law by the governor.

## Human Trafficking

**Position:** Support

**Status:** [SB 1154](#), to decriminalize and expunge records of trafficking victims was signed into law.

[HB 183](#) will enable human trafficking non-profits to put up and maintain temporary posters and signs placed in or around safety rest areas for victim support. This bill was signed into law.

For AAUW's position on this issue, review [AAUW's Quick Facts on Human Trafficking](#).

## Medicaid Redesign: Healthy Idaho Plan

**Position:** Support

**Status:** Stalled. See action steps below.

**Action:** Write a letter to the editor (scroll down to next section for links).

A Joint Health and Welfare Committee hearing was scheduled for January 30. Read the [flyer here](#). Read in the [Idaho Statesman](#) about task force recommendations and innovation in other states that may lead legislators toward coverage for uninsured Idahoans.

AAUW Idaho supports 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.

## Minimum Wage

**Position:** Support

**Status:** [SB 1111](#) was printed by Senate State Affairs on 2/27 and awaits a hearing. Read the latest report on [KTVB.com](#), which suggests a hearing is unlikely.

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 should, do better.

The proposed bill increases the minimum wage from the current federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour to \$8.25 per hour on July 1, 2015, and to \$9.25 on July 1, 2016. The current tiered wage structure for tipped and seasonal employees is maintained with the seasonal worker age limit lowered from age 20 to age 18. Wages for tipped employees will increase from \$3.35 per hour to \$3.80 per hour on July 1, 2015; and to \$4.25 on July 1, 2016. Wages for seasonal employees will increase from \$4.25 per hour to \$4.70 per hour on July 1, 2015; and to \$5.35 per hour on July 1, 2016.

## Early Learning

**Position:** Support

**Status:** Representatives Pat McDonald and Christy Perry introduced a bill on 3/23 that would introduce a pilot program for early learning education. 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.

**Status:** The bill quietly faded away.

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.

## Women's Reproductive Rights



**Position:** Oppose interference in women's private medical decisions

**Status:** Read below

[House Bill 154](#) - to limit a woman's ability to access medication abortion - was passed in the House and Senate State Affairs Committee. [AAUW](#) opposes attempts by lawmakers to insert themselves into women's private medical decisions and limit access to safe and legal health care services. This bill was signed into law by the governor on 4/6.

[Senate Bill 1102](#) - to require admitting privileges for physicians performing surgical abortions - sits in Senate State Affairs as of 4/6. Again, [AAUW](#) opposes measures that jeopardize women's health and safety by instituting more barriers between women and the health care services they need. Rural Idaho women and those with limited resources will suffer the heaviest burden if this unnecessary legislation becomes law.

This legislation is politically motivated and has nothing to do with providing quality medical care for Idaho women. Abortion providers are already appropriately regulated. Idaho providers are currently required to comply with a variety of federal, state, and local regulations and health care professionals are required to maintain professional standards and licenses. These are the same regulations and professional standards imposed on other providers of office-based surgery throughout the state.

Credit for the outstanding safety record of abortion care is attributed to the specialized care given and received in outpatient facilities, which currently provide 95% of the abortion care in the United States.

If the 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.