

Fall AAUW Public Policy News

Mary Braun Modder

I am very pleased to have been appointed the new Public Policy Coordinator for AAUW-WI. For the past year, I have served on the AAUW National Public Policy Committee, so I am proud to take this next step forward.

It has been a busy year for AAUW, with a number of victories at the national level. The **United States Supreme Court** made three rulings that moved the AAUW public policy agenda:

**1. Pregnancy discrimination: Young v. UPS**

A female UPS employee had requested lighter work due to complications with her pregnancy. It was denied and she was forced to go on unpaid leave and then was fired. The court ruled in favor of Ms. Young 6-3.

**2. Healthcare coverage: King v. Burwell**

This case dealt with the part of the Affordable Care Act that gave subsidies or tax credits for exchanges established by the state. Opponents of the Affordable Care Act argued if the state refused to set up the exchange and the federal government stepped in (such as in the case of Wisconsin), no tax credit would be given. Justice Roberts wrote the opinion upholding the Affordable Care Act, saying that the law promised subsidies even if the federal government set up the exchange.

**3. Marriage Equality: Obergefell v. Hodges**

The Supreme Court ruled that same sex couples had a constitutional right to be married in every state.

Looking ahead, there are a number of important cases looming on the horizon for next year. Given the age of several of the justices, the next president will have the duty of appointing at least one and maybe two justices, which will affect policy for decades to come.

**News from Washington regarding the reauthorization of the Every Child Left Behind:**

After 13 years, the U.S. Senate, in a bipartisan vote of 81 to 17, passed the Every Child Achieves Act (ECAA), a reauthorization of the Every Child Left Behind (NCLB), passed in 2002.

The Every Child Achieves Act includes new assessment and accountability systems, including:

-a requirement to use **multiple measures** to evaluate student performance in elementary and middle schools;

-a mandate that states include **at least one indicator of student or school supports**– such as access to advanced coursework, access to school counselors or nurses, and access to fine arts and regular physical education -within their accountability system to help draw attention to achievement gaps;

-a provision allowing parents to **opt-out of state-designed assessments** if state and local policies allow

-a measure to **audit and streamline assessment systems**;

-Ensure the bill<sup>1</sup>'s pilot program on state-designed assessment is accessible to all states that meet the criteria and that those assessment systems are **driven by teaching and learning** and not accountability alone.

– federal funding to improve and modernize school libraries.

-a planning grant for states to set up **early childhood systems**.

The House of Representatives, by a razor thin margin of 218-213, recently passed its own version of ESEA, called the Student Success Act, a bill that, unlike the ECAA, erodes the federal role in advancing opportunity for students most in need.

Educators did help improve it, however, with an amendment to protect schools from being punished by the 95 percent participation rule when parents choose to opt their children out of standardized tests. (Under NCLB, schools are sanctioned if more than 5 percent of students don't take the standardized test.)

**Now members from the Senate and the House have to meet in conference to hammer out a final bill that, if approved by both chambers, will then be sent to the White House.**

Here is an update on the provisions that AAUW followed closely:

- AAUW applauds the passing of Sen. Richard Blumenthal's (D-CT) amendment to provide grants to states for the funding of Title IX enforcement.
- Sen. Elizabeth Warren's (D-MA) data transparency amendment passed. This amendment garnered bipartisan support and enhances the utility of data by enabling schools to examine the intersection of categories such as race, gender, and disability.

- Equal opportunities for girls in athletics will be ensured, thanks to Sen. Patty Murray's (D-WA) amendment, which requires schools to report basic data on the number of female and male students in athletic programs and their expenditures on the programs.
- An amendment was proposed by Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) to increase STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) opportunities for girls, which passed on a bipartisan vote.
- Sen. Tom Udall's (D-NM) amendment passed, which requires schools to address the unique needs of expectant and parenting students.
- Sen. Chris Murphy's (D-CT) amendment failed to pass, which would have made it possible for the federal government to enforce the civil right to quality education for all students.
- AAUW successfully worked to defeat three Senate voucher amendments, proposed by Sens. Lamar Alexander (R-TN), Steve Daines (R-MT), and Tim Scott (R-SC). In the companion House bill, AAUW worked to defeat Rep. Mark Walker's (R-NC) voucher amendment.

As the bills move forward, AAUW looks forward to continuing to work with Congress to improve the Every Child Achieves Act by adding provisions for school accountability. It is critical to include these measures before the bill is sent to the President's desk to ensure the achievement of all K-12 students.

## Wisconsin Budget Update

Here's a glimpse at education in the State budget:

### **School funding**

***provides \$208 million in new public education funding over the next two years, compared to the previous budget.*** It's difficult to pinpoint the share of new resources that would go to public schools, but much of the new money would get delivered in a way that would not allow districts to use it to educate students. The state is spending \$1,014 less on each student now than compared to 2008 and the small increase doesn't even begin to make up for lost revenue.

### **Taxpayer-funded vouchers**

***Expands voucher subsidies.*** Students who could participate outside of Milwaukee and Racine would start at 1 percent of a district's enrollment and climb each year until the cap is lifted in a decade. Lawmakers could speed up the process of expanding vouchers statewide, as they have in the past. The expansion would reduce state funding for public schools by \$48 million over two years, and increase support for private schools by the same amount. School districts that do not have students attending voucher schools

would still likely have general state aid decreased under this proposal to pay for the voucher program.

### **Special needs vouchers**

***Allows students with disabilities to attend private schools using publicly funded vouchers.*** This is available if the student had previously applied to attend a different school district under the open enrollment program, and been declined. Students with disabilities who attend private schools do not have the same protections and rights as those who attend public schools. **Intense opposition by WEAC and disability-rights groups defeated previous similar proposals.**

### **School takeovers**

***Turns over some Milwaukee Public Schools to private school or charter school operators.*** Staff would be fired and required to reapply. This could also apply to the Racine or Madison school districts, if student performance in those schools slips.

### **Privately run charter schools**

***Establishes new ways to create independent charter schools, without the approval of the local school board.*** Among those options is the creation of a new "Office of Educational Opportunity" within the University of Wisconsin system, which will be authorized to create independent charter schools in districts with at least 25,000 students - i.e., Milwaukee and Madison. As charter schools expand, they will be financed like vouchers by shifting funding from public school districts.

### **Accountability and Assessments**

The budget includes changes that would:

- Overhaul the report card system that shows how well schools and districts are meeting expectations.
- End the use of assessments aligned with the Common Core, a set of educational standards developed by states working together.
- Provide an additional \$7.0 million over two years to implement new statewide assessments.
- Seek a rule change from the federal government so that public schools, charter schools, and private voucher schools could choose which assessment they wanted to administer, rather than all having to administer the same one. This measure would make it more difficult to compare student performance across types of schools.

### **Other changes**

The proposed budget includes other changes that would affect K-12 education, including:

- Allowing high school students to earn up to half the credits necessary for graduation by demonstrating competency or creating a "learning portfolio."
- Phasing out a voluntary racial integration program (Chapter 220) that helps racially balance Milwaukee's city and suburban schools.
- Prohibiting students from graduating unless they pass a civics test.
- Requiring the state to grant a Wisconsin teaching license to any individual who previously had a teaching license in another state and at least a year of experience. Put another way, Wisconsin would have to grant teaching licenses to individuals with licenses from other states, even if the other state has much lower standards for licensing.

## *Republican Representative Andre Jacque circulates trio of anti-women's health bills for co-sponsorship*

July 23, 2015

MADISON –Today, Representative Andre Jacque (R-DePere) circulated three bills for co-sponsorship directly attacking Planned Parenthood and other providers of women's health care. The trio of bills could block access to needed health care for women across Wisconsin through further defunding of these trusted providers.

Jacque's co-sponsorship memos make it clear that the bills take aim squarely at Planned Parenthood. Two of the three bills would further defund Planned Parenthood by taking away their Title X funding and making changes to Medicaid reimbursements. The third adds unnecessary targeted requirements for providers of abortion services.

Rep. Jacque circulated these bills just days after Governor Walker signed a 20 week abortion ban into law. During the last 4 years, Republicans have passed bills to limit access to birth control and abortion and have defunded Planned Parenthood at the state level. The bills circulated today would further limit women's health care access and likely result in the closure of additional women's health centers.