

April 22, 2021 AAUW ACTION ALERT

This month, our hearts are both heavy and hopeful. On April 15, 2021, the House of Representatives voted 217-210 to pass the Paycheck Fairness Act with bipartisan support. Your tireless work is a huge reason we are one giant step closer to the bill becoming law. But this past month has also marked a continuation of hard and scary times, with racist attacks, tragic shootings and troubling bills across the states. We are proud to work hand in hand with you to ensure that tomorrow looks brighter.

May we build a stronger future for everyone,
The AAUW Public Policy & Legal Advocacy Team

Act — *Take action on the most pressing policies*

Now that PFA has passed the House, it joins several AAUW public policy priorities waiting for action in the Senate. These bipartisan bills need your vocal support now more than ever:

- **Paycheck Fairness Act (PFA):** AAUW has worked for decades to pass this landmark legislation to advance pay equity, and this is the year it will finally triumph. Demand [equal pay for equal work!](#)
- **Equal Rights Amendment (ERA):** The historic amendment, which would once and for all ensure constitutional gender equality, was first proposed nearly 100 years ago. Tell your Senators to [ratify the ERA now!](#)
- **Equality Act:** America's civil rights laws should provide explicit protections against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Ensure your Senators know [equality means including all people!](#)

Learn — *Dig deeper into the issues that matter*

American Jobs Plan

President Biden announced the \$1.5 trillion American Jobs Plan to continue the mission of “building back better.” On the heels of the American Rescue Plan, this first federal discretionary spending proposal invests heavily in education, housing, public

health and climate change to address the country's most pressing needs. Among other things, it proposes:

- Critical funding for education:
 - A 41% increase to the Education Department budget, most of which targets Title I programs for high-poverty schools.
 - \$100 billion to upgrade and build new public schools, investing \$12 billion in community college infrastructure and \$25 billion to upgrade child-care facilities.
 - \$3 billion to increase federal Pell Grants, increasing the maximum award by \$400 and making Dreamers eligible for the grants.
 - \$15 billion to create up to 200 centers of excellence that serve as research incubators at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), to provide graduate fellowships for underserved populations
 - \$1 billion to the Department of Justice for Violence Against Women Act programs, including funding to support women at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs) and Tribal colleges and universities (TCUs).
- Urgent investment in our nation's workplaces:
 - \$400 billion for the "[Care Economy](#)," to expand access to home- or community-based care and provide higher wages and more benefits for caregivers, who are disproportionately women of color, have largely stayed on the job throughout the COVID-19 crisis.
 - \$48 billion for American workforce development infrastructure, which would focus on registered apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships, creating millions of new registered apprenticeship slots.
 - \$40 billion for a new Dislocated Workers Program and training in many sectors, including clean energy, manufacturing and caregiving.
 - A \$10 billion investment in workforce enforcement penalties to compensate workers when employers violate workplace safety and health rules.

Executive and Agency Actions

The U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights [announced](#) on April 6 that it will conduct a comprehensive review of the Department's regulations implementing Title IX. This will include gathering public input on the issue of sexual harassment in school environments. It also [announced](#) efforts to make it easier for eligible students to get their educational loans forgiven under the Total and Permanent Disability (TPD) discharge program.

In addition, President Biden signed several important executive actions.

- On March 31, he signed “[A Proclamation on National Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Month, 2021](#)” to honor sexual assault survivors and recommit to creating a society where all people have an opportunity to thrive without fear of abuse or assault.
- That same day, he signed “[A Proclamation on Transgender Day of Visibility, 2021](#),” which recognizes the generations of struggle, activism and courage that have brought our country closer to full equality for transgender and gender non-binary people in the United States.
- On March 24, President Biden signed “[A Proclamation on National Equal Pay Day, 2021](#),” reaffirming the administration’s commitment to ensuring equal pay for low-wage workers, working families, and all women.

Engage — *Share the important work we're doing*

- The nominations of two dedicated civil rights champions, AAUW-supported [Vanita Gupta](#) and [Kristen Clarke](#), to the U.S. Department of Justice are historic for our nation. Their appointments would signal a strong commitment to civil rights accountability and enforcement that is acutely needed in our country. In a bipartisan and hard-won victory, the Senate finally pushed back against the racist and sexist treatment of these candidates, and confirmed Vanita Gupta, who will be the first woman of color Associate Attorney General of the United States. Now, we must continue the groundswell of support for the confirmation of Kristen Clarke, who would be the first Black woman to become Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division at the Department of Justice.
- AAUW stands with the AAPI community to demand an end to the rising tide of anti-Asian racism and violence. Along with AAUW CEO Kim Churches’ [statement](#), AAUW [joined](#) a “Letter to President Biden Calling for Emergency Safety and Relief for Asian American and Pacific Islander Communities” and [endorsed](#) Testimony to the House Judiciary Committee on Anti-Asian Violence.
- In condemnation of continued recent hate crimes, AAUW [joined](#) the “Letter to Congress Encouraging Support for the Khalid Jabara and Heather Heyer NO HATE Act.”
- AAUW joins 35 civil rights and education organizations in signing “[The Civil Rights Principles for Student Loan Debt Cancellation](#),” outlining how to ensure that broad loan cancellation provides for equity and supports all student loan

holders, especially women and Black and Latino individuals, who have been disproportionately impacted by the crushing debt of student loans.

- In the past month, AAUW has signed on to important efforts regarding student loan debt and forgiveness, paid sick leave, and more. Check out our [letters, comments, testimony and legal briefs](#) to learn more about AAUW's positions and advocacy efforts regarding economic security, civil rights and education.