

AAUW of Oregon Fall 2019 Public Policy Update

Here's hoping that you had a wonderful summer. It certainly seemed to me to fly by quickly. In any event, while the "short" legislative Session doesn't begin until February, 2020 (2-3 to 3-8-2020), beginning Monday, September 16th, the legislature will meet for a 3-day "Legislative Days" Session. The first of these series of Legislative Days took place in September, and the next takes place November 18 - 20, 2019. Legislative Days are held for a number of reasons and, as you might imagine, a lot goes on behind the scenes. The hearings are "Informational" where witnesses testify at the request of a Committee or legislator. These witnesses generally testify about how legislation that was passed in the previous long Session is going, or showcase topics that may be taken up during the 2020 Short Session, and beyond.

Here is our agenda:

1. **A Very Preliminary Look-See at the 2020 Legislative Session**
2. **AAUW of OR Members Attend Campaign Finance Reform Forums – Thank You!!**
3. **ACTION ITEM - Critical School District Hearings To Determine How Student Success Act Funds Will Be Spent**
4. **Attention Being Drawn to Child Care for ALL - An Important Economic Justice Issue for all of Oregon's Women and Families**
5. **Reproductive Health Care Watch for the Portland Metro area, and Clatsop, Columbia, Jackson and Tillamook Counties**
6. **AAUW of OR Legislative Agenda for the 2020 Session**

1. A Very Preliminary Look-See at the 2020 Legislative Session

Before we get to a broad-brush forecast for the 2020 Session, it is difficult to know whether an even shorter Short Session is going to be called in order to deal with potential questions about legislation that passed during the 2019 Session that narrowed the definition of aggravated murder and thereby limited situations where prosecutors can seek the death penalty. There seems to be some doubt as to whether this new law might benefit those who have already been sentenced but who are successful in pursuing an appeal. If the appeal is upheld and the defendant re-sentenced, can he or she be sentenced under the old law and face the death penalty, or under the new law and avoid it? At this moment signals aren't good that this issue will be on the docket for the February 2020 Short Session, or the September or November Legislative Days. Perhaps another very short Session will be called by the Governor, but a decision on that time frame is way above my pay grade!

It looks as if the environmental and firearms bills that did not pass during 2019 Session – two of the three bills that occasioned the Senate Republican walkouts – will be re-introduced during the 2020 Short Session. It is less than clear whether there will be another run at removing religious and philosophical exemptions for vaccines, which was the third bill that caused a walkout. If introduced, the firearms bill should be similar to House Bill 2505 that required firearms not under one's immediate control to be

locked up, that lost or stolen firearms must be reported and firearms owners/possessors must supervise children who use firearms or face civil and/or criminal penalties.

(<https://olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/2019R1/Measures/Overview/HB2505>)

At this moment legislators are trying to determine which bills they will introduce. Senators can file only one bill and House members can only file two for the 2020 Session. There are also Committee, agency and other types of bills, but legislators' abilities to introduce bills is limited.

2. AAUW of OR Members Attend Campaign Finance Reform Forums – Thank You!!

Representative Dan Rayfield (Corvallis) has been traveling around Oregon in order to see what campaign finance reform might look like here. And AAUW of OR has been there!! THANKS to the following members to attended these roadshow events: Portland Branch - Kathe Hart, Kathy Moyd, Sue Thomas, Diane Winn [and myself]; Eugene - Cindy Parker from Eugene; Medford - Ann Bard, Gayle Clason and Gretchen King. The next stop on the roadshow is in Salem on October 17th and Bend on the 23rd. Mary Ellen Dello Stritto, Teresa Schader, Micki Varney and Joyce Zook are planning to attend the Salem stop, and Laurel Sorlie is representing the Bend Branch.

Those who attended these events were given a review of legal and policy issues relating to campaign finance reform. A discussion with other members of the audience and Rep Rayfield followed. As backdrop of course, the US Supreme Court in its *Citizens United* decision has ruled that the First Amendment of the Constitution allows corporations and labor unions to contribute to campaigns using their general funds, but this leaves a number of questions open for consideration. Should there be dollar limits on donor contributions and / or campaign spending? If donor limits are enacted, to whom should they apply, i.e. individuals, corporations, nonprofits, unions? What should these limits be? Should there be public funding options? If we attempt to promote transparency about who is actually behind PAC's and so-called "issue" ads, how do we do so?

Although we may not have been transformed into campaign finance reform experts or Constitutional law scholars, we learned a lot and put AAUW of OR Public Policy into action! We will also be better equipped to advocate on behalf of much needed campaign reform when it is introduced. Stay tuned!!

3. ACTION ITEM - Critical School District Hearings To Determine how Student Success Act Funds Will Be Spent

One of the truly impressive successes during the 2019 Session was the passage of the Student Success Act. This law aims to correct three decades of underinvestment in our schools and our children and includes sweeping provisions for new and improved services for children and families.

[See: https://www.oregon.gov/ode/StudentSuccess/Pages/default.aspx?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery and <https://www.oregon.gov/ode/Pages/default.aspx>]

One of the interesting aspects of this law – other than the \$2 billion amount -- is that school districts by and large get to decide how and where they wish to direct this

funding. There are certain parameters, of course, but a great deal of discretion will be given to each school district. School districts must file a report outlining their proposals, but prior to deciding where to direct these funds, they must hold public hearings. Your attendance at these hearings is critically important. Do we want the funds spent on football fields or address critical needs? There are a variety of these needs, including those relating to social and mental health issues, but how can we most effectively spend the money awarded via the Student Success Act initiative? It is time for you to voice your opinion about where the money should be spent.

Please let me know whether you have attended these hearings and what took place. Sometimes it takes more than a village to raise a child!!

4. Attention Being Drawn to Child Care for ALL - An Important Economic Justice Issue for all of Oregon's Women and Families

No matter where one lives in Oregon, it is clear that families face an escalating childcare crisis due to the lack of available, affordable and good quality childcare. Childcare workers also face poverty-level wages. The absence of these services challenges parents, and especially women, in maintaining stable employment, obtaining education, earning higher wages and more. It is also the case that child care investments don't just help student parents finish school, keep families off public assistance or help children grow and learn, but they also have positive impacts on the well-being of the generations and children of the future.

One of AAUW of OR's longer-term public policy goals is to meet the challenge of these unmet child care needs. During the last Session Representative Karin Power [Milwaukie, Sellwood] sponsored legislation that led to the creation of the Task Force on Access to Quality Affordable Child Care. Here's the link to the legislation setting up the Task Force:

<https://olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/2019R1/Downloads/MeasureDocument/HB2346/Enrolled>

At this point we haven't articulated firm policy solutions about how to tackle this problem and we're likely looking legislation in 2021. Sometimes good legislation needs to hear from many voices, and mature from there. It may also be the case that we will be able to tackle one or two issues, and then go from there. It's such a critical issue.

Here's the report "Oregon's Unmet Child Care Needs." and I highly commend your reading it, as well as distributing it to others:

5. Reproductive Health Care Watch for the Portland Metro area, and Clatsop, Columbia, Jackson and Tillamook Counties

As many of you may know, the Providence St. Joseph Health Care system is in the process of purchasing Care Oregon. The new entity will be one of two "Coordinated Care Organizations" which distribute Medicaid funds to providers in the Portland metro area, plus Clatsop, Columbia, Jackson and Tillamook Counties. Providence vows that it is committed to providing for the needs of all communities and is a faith-based and mission-drive secular organization, but it is also based on Catholic values and adheres to

prescriptions issued by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Here is a link to the "Ethical and Religious Directive for Catholic Services:
<http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/health-care/upload/Ethical-Religious-Directives-Catholic-Health-Care-Services-fifth-edition-2009.pdf?emci=67b60038-fed4-e911-bcd0-2818784d4349&emdi=67540c12-6ed5-e911-bcd0-2818784d4349&ceid=1196261>.

As you will read, this document discourages institutions from providing abortion care, but also directs Catholic health institutions away from "*promoting or condoning contraceptive practices but should provide, for married couples and the medical staff who counsel them, instruction both about the Church's teaching on responsible parenthood and in methods of natural family planning.*"

At this moment NARAL-Pro-Choice Oregon and AAUW of OR are asking you to monitor whether this merger has any impact in the affected communities regarding the provision of the full range of reproductive health care. If you learn of any reproductive health care denials, please contact me and we'll figure out where to go from there.

6. AAUW of OR Legislative Agenda for the 2020 Session

This may not exactly be what you want to hear, nor what I want to report, but our agenda for the upcoming Session is still unclear. Given the limited number of bills that legislators can introduce, we may need to wait until the 2021 Session to accomplish larger legislative goals. We are, however, doing what we can to get an age discrimination bill placed into the legislative hopper, as well as to join with other coalitions to foster economic and social justice for women and families. As I said above regarding another issue — stay tuned !!

Conclusion

Thanks for reading this Update – and becoming involved with your School District's decisions about how to spend the Student Success Act's \$2 billion. I look forward to hearing your feedback.