

Things are starting to heat up in the Oregon political and legislative arenas and I've also got some important actions to tell you about that you and your Branch can take. November Legislative Days (Nov 18 - 20) are next up on the legislative calendar, with the 2020 Session scheduled to begin February 3rd. During Legislative Days legislators receive reports from agencies about the status of their work and any bills that require updates. They hold "informational" hearings to showcase issues that might be on the legislative docket for the 2020 or 2021 Sessions. Here is our Agenda:

- 1. Your State Public Policy Committee**
- 2. AAUW of OR Support for Fair, Equal and Transparent Legislative Redistricting**
- 3. Lobby Day Update – February 24, 2020**
- 4. Legislative Agenda**
- 5. Two Projects Well Worth Branch Public Policy Action**
- 6. A Critical Issue for Today and Tomorrow - Child Care and "Care Equity"**

1. Your State Public Policy Committee

We have a number of new and continuing members on our State Public Policy Committee and I welcome each and every one of them. They include: *Georgia Applegate* (Grants Pass), *Ann Bard* (Ashland), *Sue Klumph* (Grants Pass), *Pat Lehman* (Wallowa), *Sharron Noone* (Portland), *Kaitlin O'Donnell* (Bend), *Teresa Schader* (Lake Oswego), *Mary Pat Silvierra* (Lake Oswego) and *Joyce Zook* (Salem). We meet monthly on Tuesday evenings via ZoomChat. The Committee considers whether to support or oppose a given measure or issue, and how to generate enthusiasm for AAUW of OR Public Policy. A great group!!

2. AAUW of OR Support for Fair, Equal and Transparent Legislative Redistricting

Next week I anticipate that an initiative will be filed that seeks to amend the Oregon constitution by setting up an independent citizen commission that will draw Oregon's voting maps. Right now that important process is run by state legislators and politicians for whose benefit these lines are drawn. The Commission will consist of 12 Oregonians: 4 Democrats, 4 Republicans, and 4 from neither major party. The members will be chosen by a panel composed of three administrative law judges according to specific criteria laid out in the measure. All information will be public and maps drawn must be adopted by a majority of the Commission, including at least one member from each partisan pool.

Once the initiative has been filed, you can access information about its progress on <https://www.peoplenotpoliticiansoregon.com>.

Needless to say, it is no secret today that important decisions are being made in the our state and U.S. Capitols, and voters need to know that their vote will have as equal weight as any other citizen of Oregon. Knowing that one's vote actually counts might encourage additional civic participation. It also appears that as a result of the 2020 census, Oregon is

projected to gain another U.S. Congressional seat due to population growth. By adopting the initiative that establishes the Oregon Citizens Redistricting Commission, Oregonians can be ensured that this process is open, transparent and non-partisan.

This would be a good time for you and your Branch to consider how to support this initiative. Some ideas include — sponsoring forums, writing letters to the editor, distributing information from the website above. Please let me know if you have any questions or comments about this process!!

3. Lobby Day Update – February 24, 2020

Huge thanks to the Ashland Branch!! They have stepped forward and agreed to organize our 2020 Lobby Day which will be held on February 24th in Salem. They are in the midst of making plans and getting things in order, but they have suggested a preliminary title: *Women Legislators in Salem: Getting There and Staying There*. The event promises to be informative and fun!! The Ashland Branch and I look forward to seeing you there.

4. Legislative Agenda

The 2020 Session is short, running the month of February and through the first week in March. While policy matters are certainly considered during a short Session, its focus is historically directed towards budgetary issues. The word on the street seems to be that there will be another effort to deal with the carbon / cap and trade issue in 2020. If so, it will likely be that there won't be a lot of room for other policy related issues. This combination of factors means that it looks as if our legislative agenda is primarily directed towards the 2021 Session.

One of the issues I anticipate we will be working on in 2020 is to assure that the Center for Incarcerated Parents and Their Children at the Coffee Creek Correctional Facility receives adequate funding. As you may recall, this Center attempts to bring incarcerated women and their children together. It will provide a variety of services that are designed to, for example, increase protective factors within families, create self efficacy in parents and lead to successful parenting upon reentry. Here is the link to the bill that was passed in 2019 that created the Center:

<https://olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/2019R1/Downloads/MeasureDocument/HB3300/A-Engrossed>.

Another limitation to the short Session is the limited number of bills that the representatives can introduce: one per Senator and two per Representative. We were unsuccessful in advancing a bill regarding age discrimination in 2019, but we are hopeful to keep the momentum going by a number of to-be-announced efforts. I am also still hoping to have a bill introduced and passed in 2020 that requires colleges, universities and community colleges to obtain information on parental status from its students. We shall see. It may very well be that a campaign reform bill will be forthcoming, and depending on what it says, I may recommend to the State Public Policy Committee that we support it.

5. Two Projects Well Worth Branch Public Policy Action

In many of my Public Policy Updates I spend most of my time telling you what we have accomplished, but there are two important areas that are well worth Branch attention. The first is particularly critical and needs action ASAP.

Recognizing decades of underinvestment in our public school, the Student Success Act of 2019 added \$2 billion (yes, with a "b") in school funding over the next 2 years. This money will be divided among districts based on enrollment, as well as to early learning and statewide initiatives to support students. Each district has the responsibility to complete and file a non-competitive grant proposal to the Oregon Department of Education. While there are some guidelines, such as increasing academic achievement, reducing academic disparities (based on students of color, students with disabilities, emerging bilingual students, students navigating poverty, homeless, foster care and historical disparities) and meeting students mental and behavioral health needs, each district will be able to determine what they believe will most benefit their own district.

And where do you and your Branch come in? Right now and through November your school district is considering where to direct this funding. It has an affirmative responsibility to elicit public comment. If you have not already taken the opportunity to voice what you think the money should be spent on — now is your chance. Here is a way to determine who you should contact: <http://www.oregoned.org/contact/office-lookup>. *Do we really want the money to be spent on football fields?*

I also understand that many local sheriffs are declining to follow through and seek Extreme Risk Protection orders when they should. "ERPO's" are court orders that can temporarily remove a firearm from someone when there is a risk of harm. The big ERPO bill passed in 2017, but in 2019 additional legislation made clear that when a court order has been issued, the firearms possessor must turn over their firearms. Here's the bill: <https://olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/2019R1/Downloads/MeasureDocument/HB2013/Enrolled>. You and your branch may wish to see what is going on in your community about ERPO'S.

There is an absolutely fabulous video about "*How Extreme Risk Protection Orders Save Lives*," prepared by Penelope Spurr who is a Lake Oswego high school student. It was also presented at OR Pediatric Society's Annual Continuing Medical Education Conference. Here's a link to the presentation: <https://oregonpediatricsociety.org/video-how-extreme-risk-protection-orders-save-lives/>. Thanks Lake Oswego Branch for letting me know about this important issue !!

6. An Issue for Today and Tomorrow - Child Care and "Care Equity"

One of the issues that is likely to be percolating throughout several different political and legislative arenas is our current child care crisis. As many of you know, child care today is very costly and high quality child care is difficult to find. It is no stretch to say that Oregon's parents face a "child care desert." The impact of this crisis on those trying to hold onto lower paying jobs is particularly acute. The lack of child care places significant roadblocks in the way of women begin able to maintain employment — in good jobs — and obtain further education. In September, 2019, Family Forward, which is one of our frequent coalition partners, issued a report "*Oregon's Unmet Needs Child Care: It's time to Invest - Our Future Depends on It.*" [<http://www.familyforwardoregon.org/site/wp-content/uploads/FFO-Child-Care-Report-2019-REV.pdf>]. I urge you to read it as AAUW of OR will be doing what it can to ensure that this issue receives the attention it deserves.

Stay tuned for specific legislative proposals regarding the child care crisis, but if you have any suggestions - what might they be? What is the status of child care in your community? You and your Branch may wish to contact community colleges / universities to see what programs there are (or not) for child care or speak with high school parents. Your Branch may wish to host a forum about the issue or reach out to different communities. This information will likely be very helpful to AAUW of OR public policy advocates when they are attempting to advance child care legislation.

One avenue to ameliorate the crisis is being undertaken by Multnomah County Commissioner Jessica Vega Pederson who beginning in 2018 convened a coalition of leaders from public, private and social sectors to examine and advance a momentum towards equitable preschool access. The Task Force has published a *Preschool for All Report*, which is well researched, considered and communicated. [<https://multco.us/file/82315/download>]. One of the more interesting findings is that Oregon is the fourth least affordable state in the country when it comes to preschool and that only families in the deepest poverty receive federal and state funding for their children — those below the federal poverty level, with a combined annual income under \$25,100 for a family of four. Way to go Commissioner Vega Pederson and everyone who served on the Task Force!!

Conclusion

Well, that's about it from here. As we approach Thanksgiving, I hope each and every one of us finds some way to thank and give back to others. Even if it doesn't involve public policy!! That said, please let me know what efforts you and your Branch have made on the various items mentioned above — and thanks in advance to you!