

ALL POLITICS ARE LOCAL

VOTER EDUCATION

Since Ashland elects non-partisan officials, each election year Public Policy sponsors a candidate forum for the general public sometimes co-sponsored with another non-profit organization. In 2020, we hosted a forum for candidates running for Ashland Mayor and Ashland City Council. The questions asked were drafted by the Public Policy team and provided to the candidates prior to the event. Team members took on responsibilities such as timing candidates responses, screening audience questions or writing thank you notes to participants. The Public Policy Chair moderated.

KNOW YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

Each year, Ashland Public Policy sponsors the January Branch meeting. We invite our local elected officials; District 5 State Representative, District 2 Senator or Ashland City Councilors or Mayor. The state officials update us on their priorities for the upcoming legislative session that starts in February each year. Most recently in 2022, we moderated a panel discussion for the four female Ashland City Councilors; Gina DuQuenne, Tonya Graham, Paula Hyatt and Stefani Seffinger. This is the first year in Ashland's history that it has had a female majority Council and a female Mayor and female City Recorder all elected positions. In 2021, we interviewed our newly elected Mayor, Julie Akins.

ADVOCACY FOR LEGISLATION

Each year, Trish Garner, State Public Policy Committee Chair, reviews committee bills, identifies those that AAUW of Oregon wants to support and gets members to start writing testimonial letters to legislators to demonstrate AAUW's commitment to the legislation. In 2022, nine bills were designated as AAUW supported. The members of the committee were asked to rally their respective local public policy teams to start writing their testimonial letters, ASAP. We needed testimonials for all bills but the primary focus was HB 4002 which mandated paid overtime for farmworkers. Our Ashland team also had a second priority, HB 4092, sponsored by our District 5 Representative, Pam Marsh. HB 4092 provided statewide financial and administrative support for Broadband governance.

The result; statewide twenty-five letters in support of HB 4002 and nine letters in support of HB 4092 (Ashland submitted nine of these thirty testimonial letters) with both bills passing.

PAY EQUITY EDUCATION

When the Pay Equity Bill passed in 2017, not many people knew about pay equity discrimination and how the bill addressed the issue. The state Public Policy team published a toolkit for educating members and the public. The Ashland Public Policy team sponsored a forum at our local library inviting the public to attend and learn about the recently enacted law.

The event was advertised in the local papers and on social media. Refreshments were offered as an incentive for attendance. Copies of the tool kit were offered to attendees to guide them in ensuring pay equity in their workplaces.

TRANSPARENCY IN REPORTING

In 2009-2010, there was a series of stranger sexual assaults in Ashland. Detective Carrie Hull noticed that the victims in many of these, and other sexual assault cases, had either withheld

information that would identify the offender or provided false information about how the assault had happened. Over the next several years Detective Hull continued to seek out information directly from those who experienced victimization. She eventually launched the You Have Options Program (YHOP) in 2013. In 2014, YHOP became a law enforcement model used across the country.

During this time, the Ashland Public Policy team met with the police officer, Carrie Hull, to determine whether YHOP applied to sexual assaults at our local university, Southern Oregon University (SOU). They did not. Our team met with the university's Title IX coordinator who manages reporting for on campus sexual assaults. Our team advocated for more transparent reporting of sexual assaults and more victim-centered support services. Eventually, the university instituted the Campus Choice program incorporating many elements of the YHOP and started providing more timely and accurate reporting of campus sexual assaults.

Note: Carrie Hull was nominated by the Ashland Public Policy team for the AAUW Breaking Barriers Achievement Award and received the 2015 award for her work in creating and launching the You Have Options Program.