

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 nonprofit organization. In 2020, we hosted a forum for candidates running for Ashland Mayor and Ashland City Council. In 2023, we hosted a forum for candidates for Ashland School Board. In 2024, we are hosting State Rep Pam Marsh {D-Ashland) and former State Rep Peter Buckley, now Executive Director of Southern Oregon Success (SOS), who works with the Southern Oregon Early Childhood Support Network. The Network revolves around a Family Success Plan process. People who are pregnant, are thinking about becoming pregnant or have children under 5 years old will develop Individualized Family Success Plans. The goal of the Plans is to make sure every child in Jackson and Josephine Counties enters Kindergarten ready to thrive.

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. City officials update us on local issues and priorities.

ADVOCACY FOR LEGISLATION

At the State level, we have two Co-Chairs of the State Public Policy Committee. Subcommittees work on 1) bills in that year's State Legislature and 2) ways in which various AAUW branches across the state want help with Public Policy issues. For the 2024 Legislature, we anticipate bills on housing and homelessness, childcare, drug addiction and treatment and budget issues; we will be following these issues in 2024. In the 2023 Legislature, we advocated for eight {8) bills which were passed and signed by the Governor.

PAY EQUITY EDUCATION

When the Pay Equity Bill passed in 2017, few 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.

LOCAL ASHLAND ISSUES

Ashland, like much of the rest of Oregon, is a "childcare desert" where more families need childcare services than there are spaces available, even if the parents could pay for them. The City of Ashland initiated a grant program for childcare providers to offer subsidies to families who need help paying for childcare services; the first year of the grant program runs through June 2024 and the hope is the number of children in childcare will increase. AAUW is playing a role in the City's program through participation in the City's Ad Hoc Committee on Childcare.