



washington update

NEWS FROM THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN

From: AAUW Public Policy & Government Relations Dept.

To: AAUW Public Policy Leaders

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Education Funding Update

On Wednesday, June 7, the House appropriations subcommittee with jurisdiction over Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education programs approved the Fiscal Year 2007 spending bill on a 9-7 party-line vote. The full House Appropriations Committee is expected to meet on June 12 to mark up the Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill. The Senate has not yet begun working on this appropriations bill. AAUW's Capitol Hill Lobby Corps visited House offices on Thursday, June 8 to urge representatives to support higher education preparedness and job training programs in the Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill that will provide access to programs that ensure women and girls future choices will allow them to stay out of poverty and to obtain the education and training that will prepare them for the 21st century workforce. When the House and Senate started debating the budget resolutions this past spring, education programs were facing very deep cuts over the next five years. The work that Lobby Corps and AAUW members around the country did to challenge these cuts laid important ground work, forcing more room in the budget for AAUW priorities. The House of Representatives approved a FY07 budget resolution (218-210) on May 18. During the budget resolution debate a non-binding provision inserted by Rep. Michael Castle (R-DE) called for increasing funding for Labor-HHS-Education by nearly \$7.2 billion beyond the President's request.

Discrimination Once Again Kept Out of the Constitution

On Wednesday, June 7, a vote to limit debate on the so-called federal marriage amendment failed (49-48) in the Senate. Sixty votes are needed to limit debate (cloture), and a two-thirds majority to pass a constitutional amendment. To become ratified, it would need two-thirds support in the Senate and House, and then would have to be ratified by at least 38 state legislatures. AAUW strongly opposes the notion that discrimination has any place in our

country, and such discrimination should never be codified in the U.S. Constitution.

How Does Your State Fare on Reproductive Rights?

Three advocacy groups -- [Ipas](#), the [National Gay and Lesbian Task Force](#), and the [SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Health Collective](#) -- have released state-by-state scores and rankings of state laws related to reproductive and gay rights. The rankings can be viewed on the interactive [Mapping Our Rights](#) web site, which ranks the 50 states and the District of Columbia based on more than 20 indicators, including whether states allow public funding for family planning and abortion, whether health care providers can deny medical services because of their personal beliefs and whether abstinence-only curricula are taught in schools. Check out [Mapping Our Rights](#) to see how your state ranks.

No More Money

AAUW is one of [more than 200 organizations](#) supporting the [No More Money](#) campaign to oppose continued federal funding for abstinence-only-until-marriage programs. These programs are ineffective and potentially harmful. AAUW supports the right of every woman to safe, accessible and comprehensive reproductive health services. AAUW opposes programs that limit young people's information and choices by promoting only abstinence. Abstinence-only educational programs censor information on contraception, pregnancy prevention and sexually transmitted diseases. AAUW supports comprehensive sexuality education programs that include information about both abstinence and contraception; such programs are critical in helping to combat unintended pregnancy, teen pregnancy, and sexually transmitted diseases.

U.S. Foreign Policies on Contraception Contradictory

Inadequate financial support and a restrictive policy that limits the ability of certain foreign organizations to even receive contraceptive supplies from the United States are undermining the positive impact of U.S. contributions to international family planning efforts, according to "[The Global Contraceptive Shortfall: U.S. Contributions and U.S. Hindrances](#)," by Susan A. Cohen, which appears in the Spring 2006 issue of the *Guttmacher Policy Review*. To address this problem and improve access to contraceptives for women in developing countries, a bipartisan group in Congress has introduced the Ensuring Access to Contraceptives Act of 2006, which would increase funding for and loosen restrictions on the availability of contraceptive supplies.

Case of Pharmacist Who Would Not Fill Prescriptions Thrown Out

A U.S. District Judge dismissed a lawsuit filed by a pharmacist who refused to fill oral contraceptive prescriptions and claimed that a Wal-Mart store fired him because of religious discrimination. [Read more](#) at [Kaisernetwork.org](#). AAUW supports the right of every woman to safe, accessible and comprehensive reproductive health services. Instances of pharmacists refusing to fill prescriptions for contraceptives, particularly emergency contraceptives, are disturbing. AAUW encourages efforts to increase education and access to emergency

contraception for all women, and believes emergency contraception should be available without a prescription. Greater awareness of and improved access to emergency contraception could help reduce the rates of unintended pregnancy and abortion in this country.

Always Have a Plan B

AAUW has advocated for wider access to contraception at the federal and state levels for years, including being a member of the [Back Up Your Birth Control](#) campaign which promotes awareness about emergency contraception (EC.) While AAUW has long advocated access to comprehensive reproductive health services, it is the personal stories of what happens when this access is restricted that put a real face on this public policy issue. On June 4, *The Washington Post* ran an opinion piece written by an attorney in Virginia which provides an illustration of how a real woman can be directly affected by delayed access to EC. The op-ed makes the point that 72 hours is an extremely short window for a woman with conflicting obligations. Read [What Happens When There Is No Plan B](#) and the [transcript from the online discussion](#) about the editorial.

Now Might Be a Good Time to Consolidate Those Student Loans

Interest rates on outstanding federal college loans are expected to rise July 1, 2006 to their highest rate in six years. Consolidation allows students and parents to combine their separate loans into one and lock in a low fixed interest rate -- which could save borrowers thousands of dollars over the life of their loans. Each year on July 1, the U.S. Department of Education adjusts the interest rates on outstanding college loans. Interest rates on student loans are expected to rise to just over 7 percent and interest rates on parent loans are expected to rise to 7.8 percent. Student borrowers who consolidate their outstanding loans before July 1 would be eligible to lock in an interest rate as low as 4.75 percent, which would save an average of nearly \$3,500 over the life of the loan. Parent borrowers who consolidate before July 1 would be eligible to lock in a rate as low as 6.1 percent over the life of their loan. For more information, check out the U.S. Department of Education's [Direct Consolidation Loans](#) website.

Sign Up Your Friends and AAUW Colleagues for Action Network!

Action Network is a convenient and effective way to pressure Congress to act on equity for women and girls. The more people in the Action Network, the more effective AAUW will be. Anyone can sign up for Action Network, AAUW members and nonmembers alike. It is an excellent way to introduce potential members to AAUW's advocacy. By visiting http://www.aauw.org/issue_advocacy/actionnetwork/join.cfm you can [print out](#) flyers to sign up friends, family and co-workers to the AAUW Action Network. These flyers are great to use at branch events, community events, etc.