

WASHINGTON STATE

These guides are provided as a public service and are not intended to be an endorsement of any candidate or political party. No AAUW policy position is implied by the descriptions of these issues.

Three Steps to Complete a Candidate Comparison Guide

1. Research candidate positions on each issue, relying only on publicly accessible information from official sources (see below).
2. Send the completed guide to the campaign via email (prior to publication).
3. Share with AAUW at policy@aauw.org.

How to Research Candidates

Candidates' positions on the issues are determined using publicly accessible and published information from the candidate's own campaign, legislative record and other credible sources.

Where to find information:

- Legislative records (if incumbent), found on Congress.gov or a state legislature's website, including votes and co-sponsorship
- Public statements, including press releases and content on the candidate's social media
- Campaign position papers and statements, found on the candidate's campaign website
- Independent news media, for interviews and verified quotes

Policy Position Terms

Support: Candidate has explicitly stated their support for this policy position on the record with no ambiguity, through statements, co-sponsorship, and/or votes.

Oppose: Candidate has explicitly stated their opposition to this policy position on the record with no ambiguity, through statements and/or votes.

Unknown: The candidate has not explicitly stated their support or opposition to this policy position on the record.

Mixed: The candidate has made conflicting statements and/or has taken conflicting votes on this policy position.

AAUW Election Resources

- **AAUW Public Policy Principles & Priorities:** Explore AAUW's positions on education, economic security, and civil rights.
- **AAUW-WA Public Policy Priorities**
- **2026 Civic Engagement Guide | Voter Issue Guide:** Educate yourself and your community on what's at stake for women & girls.
- **State Ballot Initiatives:** Learn about AAUW affiliates' advocacy on state ballot measures.
- **Congressional Voting Record:** Find out where members of Congress stand on key issues.

[Insert Race – e.g. “Candidates for FL-05 Congressional Election”]

Published: [MM/DD/YY]

[Candidate Name] [Party] [Incumbent]	Where the candidates stand on:	[Candidate Name] [Party] [Challenger]
---	--------------------------------	--

Education

	Increasing funding for higher education and student access ¹	
--	---	--

¹ Federal Funding, Accreditation & State Response

Suggested Questions

For Congressional candidates: *Given recent changes or proposed changes to federal accreditation requirements and student loan eligibility for professional degrees like nursing, what specific federal policies would you support or oppose to ensure Washington institutions retain access to federal student aid and flexibility — and how would you balance federal oversight with state and institutional autonomy?*

For State candidates: *Last session, higher education funding was preserved partly through one-time fund transfers while early education absorbed cuts. Is that approach sustainable? What's your plan for higher education funding once those one-time options run out — and should the state restructure capacity in response to enrollment decline, even though Washington's decline (8%) is smaller than the national average (13%)?*

For either: *Of these four goals for higher education — strong career outcomes, civic value, lower student debt, and protecting academic freedom — which would you prioritize if trade-offs were required, and what specific policy reflects that priority?*

Investing public funds in public education,
not private schools²² 2. Public Funding for Private Education (School Vouchers)

The federal Education Freedom Tax Credit, signed into law in 2025, lets individual taxpayers donate up to \$1,700 annually to nonprofits that redistribute the funds as private-school scholarships, with a dollar-for-dollar tax credit. States opt in via the governor's signature. Washington has not opted in.

Suggested Questions

For State candidates: *Should Governor Ferguson opt Washington into the federal Education Freedom Tax Credit program? What specific evidence or principle would change your position?*

Follow-up: *Supporters say this program is structured as a federal tax credit rather than a state appropriation, so it costs Washington nothing. Do you agree with that framing?*

WEA Fact Sheet. Why not vouchers?

- **Public schools have the same or better student outcomes.** [One study](#) showed that the decline in student achievement in D.C.'s voucher program was the equivalent of losing 68 days of learning. [A study on Louisiana's voucher system](#) found negative impacts even after four years.
- **Public schools are more cost-effective.** [Experts estimate](#) that voucher programs can raise education costs 25% or more. Furthermore, public school finances are transparent and highly regulated.
- **Public schools serve every student.** Regardless of physical or learning disability, LGBTQIA identification, religion, or income, public schools provide high-quality education for every student. Voucher-accepting schools [aren't required to and often don't](#).
- **Public school funds serve every student.** When education funding shifts to vouchers, it primarily serves the families whose children would attend private school anyway. In Arizona, [a study found](#) 80% of applicants for vouchers were not attending public school and 45% of applicants come from the wealthiest quarter of students.

WA Policy Institute: Yes vouchers

- Since the new federal school choice program is paid for with federal tax credits, it costs Washington state nothing—but the benefit to students who need different educational options is priceless. A simple signature from Governor Ferguson is all that it takes to unlock educational opportunities for thousands of Washington families.

NEA

- Sold as a way to help students in underresourced schools, voucher programs disproportionately benefit affluent families with children already enrolled in private schools.
- New Pop Up schools, Robin Hood in reverse (affluent families already enrolled in private school get tax credit).

This guide is a public service and not intended to be an endorsement of any candidate or political party. Candidates' positions are based on legislative records, public statements, campaign position papers and published information from credible sources.

To learn more about the AAUW Action Fund, please email Policy@aauw.org or visit www.aauwaction.org.

	Enforcing civil rights protections for all students, including LGBTQ+ and transgender students ³	
--	---	--

³ 3. Civil Rights Protections for LGBTQ+ and Transgender Students

Suggested Questions

For State candidates: *Washington voters will decide IL26-001 and IL26-638 this November. What is your position on each, and how would you address the specific concerns raised by opponents — including student privacy for abuse survivors and LGBTQ+ student safety — versus the concerns raised by supporters about parental rights and competitive fairness in girls' sports?*

Sharper follow-up: *Both initiatives bundle several distinct provisions. Are there specific elements of either initiative you'd support in isolation even if you oppose the initiative as a whole — or oppose even if you support it as a whole?*

Process question: *Both measures went directly to the ballot after the Legislature declined to take them up. Should the Legislature have engaged with these measures rather than letting them go straight to voters?*

AAUW opposes IL26-001. It is written to provide rights to some parents and not others. WEA opposes it and outlines the harms.

- Take away legal privacy protections for students and families.
- Eliminate nondiscrimination policies for homeless, immigrant, neurodiverse and transgender students.
- Empower broad parental opt-outs, silencing classroom conversations about race, gender and our real history.
- Force teachers to follow confusing rules and meet strict deadlines, creating more red tape and less time for teaching.
- Bog schools down in administrative paperwork that takes funding away from teachers.

WSCADVSA opposes it and outlines the harms:

- Youth disclosures of abuse and violence.
- Invasive genital exams of girls who play sports.
- Survivor confidentiality and trust.
- Trauma-informed practices.
- Access to supportive adults and resources.
- Safety planning for survivors experiencing family violence.
- The ability of young people to seek support when they do not feel safe at home.

AAUW-WA opposes it and outlines the harms.

- Removes right to file **harassment, intimidation and bullying complaint**.
- Removes notification of **physical or sexual assault of child by a school employee or contract employee**.
- Threatens inclusive curriculum by allowing parents access to unlimited classroom materials for review and expanded opt out rights that could disrupt learning for all students.
- Removes notification of enrollment rights for parents with children with disabilities, military families, homeless students, and students who need language assistance. See [enrollment summary](#)

This guide is a public service and not intended to be an endorsement of any candidate or political party. Candidates' positions are based on legislative records, public statements, campaign position papers and published information from credible sources.

To learn more about the AAUW Action Fund, please email Policy@aauw.org or visit www.aauwaction.org.

Economic Security

	Strengthening policies that promote pay equity, such as disclosing salary ranges, limiting salary history use ⁴	
	Expanding access to paid family, medical, sick, and safe leave for all workers and related workplace protections ⁵	

- Replaces discrimination protections for students with a single protection for parents: “the sincerely held belief of a child’s family.”
- Empower broad parental opt-outs, silencing classroom conversations about race, gender and our real history.
- Violates state privacy laws. See [Vote No: medical records access and medical services notification](#).

No Hate in WA State

- **Harming Child Abuse Victims** :Washington school counselors, school nurses, and pediatricians say [IL26-001](#) restricts student access to help for challenges like depression, sexual assault, domestic violence, bullying, and anxiety.
- **Removes common sense school record protections for victims of child abuse**: force schools to hand over sensitive information about child abuse victims to their parental abusers.
- **Worsens the teen mental health crisis**: Washington school counselors, school nurses, and pediatricians say IL26-001 will worsen the teen mental health crisis. Youth depression is at [record highs](#). More than half of teenagers [experience anxiety](#) or depression, and [one in ten](#) Washington state students say they have no one to turn to when feeling depressed. By removing common sense record protections, IL26-001 discourages students facing **domestic violence, sexual abuse or bullying** from seeking help from trusted school counselors, who would be required to release students’ confidential information.
- **Forces school counselors and teachers to knowingly put LGBTQ+ students at risk of harm or homelessness**” According to researchers, [40%](#) of LGBTQ+ homeless youth were kicked out of their home because of their identities.

⁴ 4. Pay Equity & Salary TransparencySuggested Questions

For Congressional candidates: *There is no federal salary transparency or pay data collection requirement. Would you support establishing one — and should it set a floor that preempts weaker state laws, or one that allows states like Washington to keep stronger protections?*

For State candidates: *WA state has passed strong pay equity laws including salary transparency and salary history laws. What other workplace protections would you consider supporting?*

Note: Wage theft and improvements to unemployment insurance are key issues.

⁵ 5. Paid Family, Medical, Sick & Safe Leave — and Related Workplace Protections

Washington has run a state Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) program since 2020; no federal equivalent exists. The state program is well regarded but has faced fiscal sustainability questions.

This guide is a public service and not intended to be an endorsement of any candidate or political party. Candidates’ positions are based on legislative records, public statements, campaign position papers and published information from credible sources.

To learn more about the AAUW Action Fund, please email Policy@aauw.org or visit www.aauwaction.org.

Civil Rights

Suggested Questions

For Congressional candidates: *Washington has passed strong paid family, medical, sick, and safe leave laws; federal law has none of these. Would you support federal paid leave legislation — and should it set a floor that allows states like Washington to go further, or a uniform national standard?*

For State candidates (PFML solvency): *Washington's PFML program is projected to face fund shortfalls by 2028–2030 absent changes. Would you raise the cap, narrow eligibility, or take another approach to keep the program solvent?*

For State candidates (other protections): *Do you support expanding wage theft enforcement, such as this session's Wage Recovery Act, and the new strike-related unemployment insurance benefit — or do you think these go too far in raising costs on employers?*

	Protecting access to contraception and abortion care for all, regardless of location or income ⁶	
--	---	--

⁶ 6. Access to Contraception and Abortion Care

Washington protects contraception and abortion access through state law and its 2023 Shield Law, but these protections are being directly tested — through lawsuits against Washington providers by out-of-state prosecutors, and through arguments that an 1873 federal law (the Comstock Act) could override state protections nationwide.

Suggested Questions

For Congressional candidates: *Do you support repealing the abortion-related provisions of the Comstock Act, and do you support or oppose federal efforts to invalidate state shield laws like Washington's?*

For State candidates: *Washington's Shield Law is facing direct legal tests from other states' attorneys general. What would you do, if anything, to strengthen it or close gaps in current protections?*

Combined / longer version: *Washington protects contraception and abortion access through state law and its Shield Law, but these protections are being directly tested — through lawsuits against Washington providers by out-of-state prosecutors, and through arguments that the 1873 Comstock Act could override state protections nationwide. How would you work to change or defend these rights, if at all — at the federal level, the state level, or both?*

Notes: Washington protects contraception and abortion access through state law, and its 2023 Shield Law protects people in Washington from civil and criminal actions initiated by other states over reproductive or gender-affirming care that is lawful here.

	Ensuring all Americans have the same access and right to vote ⁷	
--	--	--

Support: Candidate has explicitly stated their support for this policy position on the record with no ambiguity, through statements, co-sponsorship, and/or votes.

Oppose: Candidate has explicitly stated their opposition to this policy position on the record with no ambiguity, through statements and/or votes.

⁷ 7. Voting Rights and Mail-In Voting

Washington has conducted elections almost entirely by mail since 2011. This system is now the subject of unusually fast-moving federal legal and political conflict — current as of late June 2026, but likely to keep shifting before any forum where these questions are used.

The House has twice passed versions of the SAVE America Act, which would require proof-of-citizenship at every voter registration, among other provisions. It would not ban mail voting outright, but President Trump has pushed for it to be amended to end vote-by-mail; Senate Republicans have so far resisted ending the filibuster to pass it.

Suggested Questions

For Congressional candidates: *With a possible Supreme Court-driven split between how federal and state/local ballots are counted, and active federal litigation over Washington's voter data, do you think our mail-in system has the safeguards it needs right now — or what specifically would you change?*

For Congressional candidates: The House has twice passed versions of the SAVE America Act, which would require proof-of-citizenship at every voter registration, among other provisions. What is the strongest argument for or against the SAVE America Act?

For State candidates: WA state has successfully used mail-in voting for years. What change, if any would you support our state voting system?

Combined question: *Washington's vote-by-mail system currently accepts ballots postmarked by Election Day. A pending Supreme Court question could require federal-race ballots to be received by Election Day regardless of postmark — even while state and local races on the same ballot keep Washington's current rules. If federal courts impose this split system, what would you do, at the state or federal level, to address it?*



AAUW ACTION FUND

2026 Candidate Comparison Guide

Unknown: Candidate has not explicitly stated their support or opposition to this policy position on the record.

Mixed: Candidate has made conflicting statements and/or has taken conflicting votes on this policy position.

This guide is a public service and not intended to be an endorsement of any candidate or political party. Candidates' positions are based on legislative records, public statements, campaign position papers and published information from credible sources.

To learn more about the AAUW Action Fund, please email Policy@aauw.org or visit www.aauwaction.org.

[Insert Race – e.g. “Candidates for FL-05 Congressional Election”]

Published: [MM/DD/YY]

Where the candidates stand on:	[Candidate Name] [Party] [Incumbent]	[Candidate Name] [Party] [Challenger]	[Candidate Name] [Party] [Challenger]
--------------------------------	--	---	---

Education

Increasing funding for higher education			
Investing public funds in public education, not private schools			
Enforcing civil rights protections for all students, including LGBTQ+ and transgender students			

Economic Security

Strengthening policies that promote pay equity, such as disclosing salary ranges, limiting salary history use, and collecting pay data			
Expanding access to paid family, medical, sick, and safe leave for all workers			

Civil Rights

Protecting access to contraception and abortion care for all, regardless of location or income			
Ensuring all Americans have the same access and right to vote			

Support: Candidate has explicitly stated their support for this policy position on the record with no ambiguity, through statements, co-sponsorship, and/or votes.

Oppose: Candidate has explicitly stated their opposition to this policy position on the record with no ambiguity, through statements and/or votes.

Unknown: Candidate has not explicitly stated their support or opposition to this policy position on the record.

Mixed: Candidate has made conflicting statements and/or has taken conflicting votes on this policy position.