

AAUW CA ONLINE PROGRAM SUMMARY
JANUARY 2017
“SURVIVING THE NEW ADMINISTRATION
JANUARY 16 – FEBRUARY 2

The January program of “Surviving the New Administration” garnered some very lively discussions, fraught with despair, frustrations, anger, hope and positive ways to combat what we, as AAUW members, will face in the next four years.

We first sought the counsel of National AAUW’s Public Policy committee to make sure we did not in any way violate our non-profit and non-partisan status.

Elizabeth Holden wrote:

“AAUW’s nonpartisan status refers specifically to candidates for partisan office. Provided that your program is focused on elected officials, not candidates for office, you need not be worried about violating our tax status or nonpartisan policy.

That said, while AAUW’s nonpartisan policy means that AAUW does not endorse party-nominated candidates, we do take firm positions on policies and legislation that affects women. I would encourage to you to keep your focus on the issues and not the actors at the center of your program, and to remember that we also count many members on both sides of the aisle. As you know, for well over a century AAUW has influenced legislative debate on critical issues affecting women and girls, such as education, sex discrimination, civil rights, reproductive choice, affirmative action, and pay equity. Our nonpartisanship has meant that AAUW is uniquely positioned among women’s organizations to build bipartisan support for a Public Policy Program that promotes equity and education for all women and girls. We have been able to form productive working relationships with elected officials from both the Democratic and Republican parties ñ both parties recognize that AAUW members may very well be their supporters and neither sees AAUW as a political opponent.”

We began the discussion with.... "Do you feel that we, as AAUW women, have the power to change what is being developed by the New Administration". If so, how?"

One member stated: I personally don't feel we as AAUW women will have much effect on the incoming administration at all. It seems that those being appointed to head departments have values directly in conflict with the agencies they are slated to run. Where I feel our biggest impact will be is locally with city councils, state legislatures and maybe our Congressional members. They answer directly to us at election time, live in our communities, shop at the same farmer's markets, know our friends and colleagues. We are already seeing the impact local communities can have in that there are a few Republicans wavering on dismantling the ACA as they have been hearing from constituents. We can have an impact on our branches, educating members and mobilizing them to lobby and advocate for our AAUW issues.

Another member replied: I'm feeling pretty discouraged & pessimistic that we, as AAUW women, have the power to change what is being developed by the New Administration. I see us "treading water" for our Public Policy Issues on a national level.... and that "victory" will be keeping what we presently have. But I fear we are going to "lose water" on AAUW Public Policy Issues.

Another member chimed in: I'm sorry, we must not let ourselves fall into a discouraged and pessimistic mindset. We have voices, individual and as a strong group. We can do much to make ourselves heard. Keep taking action, whether it is marching this weekend, calling, writing letters and emails to our senators and representatives as the nomination hearings take place and afterward. Work hard as individuals to educate others and encourage action. In the past few days, I have advocated for positive action in social situations, a book group and a couples dinner group. Sometimes you must start with raising awareness, do it on all fronts.

This next reply was excellent: I have no idea how much power I will have against the new Administration, but what I do know is that death and life are in the power of the tongue. If I send up defeat and discouragement, then that's what is going to rain back down on me. I cannot hope for victory and plan for defeat. So regardless of whether or not my feelings matter to the new Administration or whether or not they care to hear what I have to say, it has no bearing on my plans. I will continue to speak out and try to have my voice heard, and I will go kicking and screaming every step of the way. There is strength in numbers, so I agree with the point about

maintaining our ground through organizations like AAUW, and the importance of standing together with other organizations who share our policy objectives. I also agree that the greatest impact will be at the local level, particularly the state level. There are extraordinary challenges ahead for left-leaning California, but that is why it is so critical that our state rises to the occasion. If any state is suited for a David vs Goliath battle with the new Administration, it's ours. My hope is that our State will be the voice for the voiceless, and bring hope to the hopeless. Since California is poised to be at the forefront of legal battles with the incoming Administration, I think the Legislature's recent decision to hire Eric Holder to represent them was a wise choice, albeit an expensive one. I saw it as California's way of flipping the bird to the new Administration, and letting them know that we are not a bunch of push-overs afraid of a good fight. That kind of action energizes and inspires me, and more importantly, it fills me with hope that the battle is not yet lost. Holder has repeatedly proven that he does not back down to bullies, and that goes a long way with me. Our Legislature's decision to hire Holder to assist them in protecting and maintaining our State's progressive agenda and its efforts to push-back against policies that are discriminatory sends a very clear message that California is ready to rumble.

Many members took time off from the program to participate in the Women's March on January 21st, posting pictures and signs from San Francisco, San Diego, San Jose, Los Angeles, Washington D.C., Redwood City and many other locales. It gave us all a sense of empowerment and encouraged us to keep fighting for equality for all.

After the euphoria of a very successful, peaceful march subsided, many wanted to continue our discussions as an avenue to vent our fears and frustrations. However, it was time to move on to the new February program on Tech Trek.

One of our board members summed it all up perfectly with advice from one of her friends on Facebook:

1. Don't use his name;
2. Remember this is a regime and he's not acting alone;
3. Do not argue with those who support him--it doesn't work;
4. Focus on his policies, not his orange-ness and mental state;
5. Keep your message positive; they want the country to be angry and

fearful because this is the soil from which their darkest policies will grow.

6. No more helpless/hopeless talk

7. Support artists and the arts

8. Be careful not to spread fake news. Check it.

9 - Donate to organizations with a history of effectively fighting for our rights.

10 - Buy from and support corporations that reject his policies. Let the others know clearly why you're rejecting them.

11 - Take care of yourselves.

12 - Resist! Copy to paste to your wall.

and [#resist](#).

I hope you are as content as I am that I belong to an organization that fights social injustice in all its ugly forms and that we have the support of one another.

Cathy Foxhoven
AAUW CA Program Chair