

The Grapevine

October 2025

Volume 42, Number 12

President's Message

Newly vaccinated for flu & COVID-19, Graham and I are traveling for a month in England and France. It's interesting to follow the US news from afar! We are in London now, headed to the coastal marshes of East Anglia along the North Sea, then off to Normandy and Paris.

The AAUW Board met September 8th to continue our 2025/26 planning efforts. Stay tuned for upcoming social, Tech Trek and fundraising events. Our goals are to raise \$50,000 during our 50th year with 75% participation! We plan to increase the High School scholarship awards from \$2,000 to \$4,000. Also, we need more volunteers for Reading Rocks, especially in Windsor!

Onward!

Nancy Jane Andrews

Healdsburg AAUW President



Speaker Series

AAUW Speaker Series Returns October 13— Join Us for a Powerful Start!

Don't Miss Our October Launch Event on Climate Change

We are delighted to announce the return of AAUW's Monthly Speaker Series! Please join us as we kick off this season with an engaging and timely presentation:

Climate Change — Economic Resilience, Climate Risk, and Local Solutions

Date: Monday, October 13

Time: 11:30 am – 1:00 pm (Presentation begins at noon)

Location: Abel De Luna Community Center, 1557 Healdsburg Avenue, Healdsburg



Guest Speaker: Jannelle Kellman, Mayor of Sausalito, Environmental Attorney, Candidate for Lt. Gov. of CA

This session will feature Jannelle Kellman, a renowned environmental attorney and recognized expert in climate risk and resilience. Jannelle brings outstanding credentials — with degrees from Yale, Oxford, and Stanford — and decades of leadership in climate action, policy, and community engagement.

She will address the significant impacts of climate change on our community, including wildfire, drought, energy challenges, and flooding. Most importantly, Jannelle will share practical steps and actionable solutions for individuals and communities, empowering us all to be part of lasting, meaningful change.

- Learn about local climate risks and strategies for economic resilience
- Get inspired by Jannelle's leadership as Mayor of Sausalito, President of the League of Cities (North Bay Division), and founder of the Center for Sea Rise Solutions
- Discover opportunities to engage in effective climate action

"I've found that conversations around economic resilience, climate risk, and local solutions tend to spark great engagement, especially with groups that care deeply about their communities." — Jannelle Kellman

- Bring your own brown bag lunch if you wish. The presentation will be followed by a brief AAUW chapter update.
- Please RSVP to **Celeste Plaister** at celesteplaister@gmail.com so we can plan for your attendance.
- We encourage you to invite non-member guests — let's open the conversation to all who care about the future of our community!

We look forward to seeing you there.

Michelle Regan, Speaker Series Chair

Celeste Plaister, Vice President



Public Policy

CA AAUW Public Policy statement re: Prop. 50 to be voted on in our statewide election

As an organization, CA AAUW is not advancing a formal recommendation for Proposition 50. However, CA AAUW is seeking to provide AAUW CA members and the wider public with **reliable information about Proposition 50**, which includes noting that **support for Proposition 50 is a non-partisan move to:**

- **preserve wider democratic norms in California;**
- **oppose Project 2025 implementation in California; and**
- **continue to advance AAUW California's mission and public policy priorities**

CA AAUW's OVERALL STATEMENT ON PROPOSITION 50 (2025):

Illegal mid-term redistricting efforts outside of California have been initiated in an attempt to eliminate the seats of federal House members who oppose a federal agenda that advances Project 2025 and authoritarian goals in order to elect candidates who will support such an agenda.

Although illegal mid-term redistricting efforts outside of California seem like a federal issue, they are now incredibly pertinent to Californians. Although California continues to maintain strong protections for women and girls, marginalized peoples, free speech, accurate history, sound science, and democratic norms—things that are in line with AAUW California's mission and public policy priorities—we are still subject to the laws, rules, and enforcement actions of a federal government that is influenced by the directives of Project 2025, instead of the will of the people.

We should seek to support all efforts to preserve and advance democracy and AAUW California's public policy priorities around gender-based equity and social justice.

The approval of [Proposition 50](#) by California voters in November 2025 will seek to combat illegal efforts to silence opposition voices and advance an executive agenda influenced heavily by [Project 2025](#). Approval of Proposition 50 will do so by approving redistricting efforts in California for the next election cycles, until maps are redrawn after the next census in 2030, triggered as a proportional response.

While this kind of redistricting response is often framed as escalation of a partisan conflict, in the current political environment, we should think carefully about what is being labeled as partisan. Partisan labeling can be reductive when the choice has become one of supporting authoritarianism or preserving functional democracy and protecting the rights of all people.

In line with democratic preservation, unlike redistricting efforts in states like Texas, Proposition 50 was created [to meet specific fairness criteria put forward to protect the voices of marginalized communities and people-centered redistricting in the future](#), including that the proposed changes set forth in Proposition 50 are:

- o only being done as a proportional response, triggered by other states' illegal efforts, and therefore necessary in order to protect democracy;
- o not further diluting the voices of historically marginalized communities;
- o only a temporary move away from independent and people-centered redistricting in CA; and
- o only being done if approved by the people of CA.

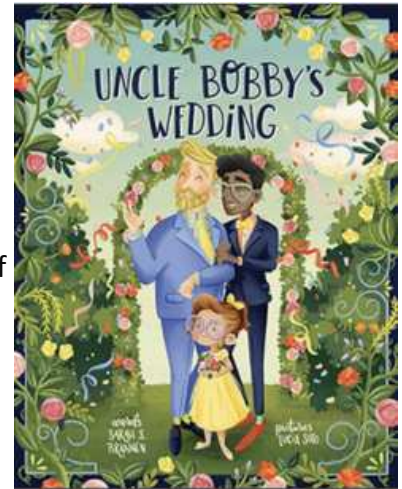
Celeste Plaister Vice President

Anti-LGBTQ+ Supreme Court Decision Will Likely Impact K-12 Education in California

(Updates After Supreme Court Ruling in June 2025)

During LGBTQ+ pride month, a decision was issued in [*Mahmoud v. Taylor*](#), a case involving the LGBTQ+ community that was heard by the Supreme Court of the United States during the 2024-2025 term. The outcome of this case may have an impact on the important [legislative](#) and on-the-ground work that AAUW California has been doing (via the [School Board Project](#) [SBP]) to protect historically accurate, diverse, and inclusive curricula in K-12 education and schools given the likely increase in legal opt-out requests by some parents.

The *Mahmoud* case began in 2022, when the Montgomery County Public School (MCPS) Board, in Maryland, updated their curriculum with more diverse and inclusive storybooks, working with childhood development experts to select books across the curriculum that would have common childhood themes but a wider array of characters, to make sure all students could see themselves in some of the texts. This included adding a handful of story books with LGBTQ+ characters.



In response to the addition of the LGBTQ+ story books, a coalition of Muslim, Roman Catholic, and Ukrainian Orthodox parents asked for an opt-out provision for any storybooks that included a normative portrayal of LGBTQ+ families, such as [Pride Puppy](#), a rhyming alphabet book that tells the story of a family having a fun day together at a LGBTQ+ pride event, and [Uncle Bobby's Wedding](#), a classic children's book about how to address the anxiety that children feel when their family grows and changes, in this case through marriage.

While [the MCPS school board initially tried to accommodate opt-out requests that arose from parents](#), the school board received such an influx of requests that course administration became unmanageable. [Opt-out policies are expensive, costly for students, schools, and taxpayers](#). This means that mass opt-outs can put further stress on already stressed logistical systems within financially burdened school districts.

On top of the logistical and actual costs and administrative struggles created by the mass opt-out requests, the MCPS school board in this case also noted that the influx of requests fundamentally “[undermined the schools’ educational obligations toward inclusion, equity, and respect](#).” [Opt-outs can hurt kids](#) whose lives and families are mirrored in the books, in this case explicitly positioning LGBTQ+ families’ experiences as something potentially problematic and harmful to others. It also teaches young people that they can opt out of teachings that encourage being decent to all humans, even those who do not look, think, act, or love in the way that their families do. Lack of access to and understanding of diverse experiences and viewpoints and the inability to engage meaningfully with widespread inclusivity also leaves the opted-out students themselves less well-equipped to move forward to function in a diverse world, a pluralistic democracy, and a global workforce.

After the first year of implementation, MCPS school board ended the opt-out request option.

In response, the parents in the *Mahmoud* case filed a lawsuit, arguing that requiring their children to engage with story books like *Pride Puppy* and *Uncle Bobby's Wedding*, whether independently or via neutral reading lessons created around them, would be a violation of their religious beliefs. Specifically, these parents claimed that lack of an opt-out provision, providing them with the ability to opt their children out of these lessons, was a violation of their First Amendment rights to freely exercise their religion, impeding their ability to instruct their children on faith-based issues related to gender and sexuality and to control when and how these issues are introduced.

Based on a 2008 case in Massachusetts, [there was precedent for ruling against these kinds of opt-outs](#) because participation in public school instruction that simply exposes a child to ideas that conflict with the religious beliefs of their parents, “does not inhibit the parent from instructing the child differently.” However, on June 27, 2025, [the majority of the Supreme Court](#) broke with this precedent, deciding the case in favor of these parents’ and upholding their constitutional right to make these opt-out requests on religious grounds. The majority decision in the case called parents’ inability to opt their children out of story books like *Pride Puppy* and *Uncle Bobby's Wedding* a “substantial interference” with the religious development of their children as the books and instruction around them were deemed “coercive.”

As such, the ruling gives a great deal of latitude to parents who want to claim a religious exemption from existing public school curricula. This means that we will likely see not only an uptick in opt-out requests for LGBTQ+ material on religious grounds throughout the country, but also an uptick in requests for opt-outs on *other* topics that parents mark as potentially problematic. Echoing some of these concerns, [Justice Sonia Sotomayor and Justice Elana Kagan gave voice to this issue during oral arguments](#) as well as in [their dissent in the case](#), noting the [potentially broad scope](#) of the parents’ position. Historically, Sotomayor and Kagen note, there have also been objections to “biographical material about women who have been recognized for achievement outside their home,” as well as books featuring divorce, interfaith marriage, and immodest dress.

Because this was a federal decision, the ruling in *Mahmoud* will likely have an impact on public school curricula and administration in California, as well.

Parents in California already have the ability to opt their children out of some material, perhaps most notably around [comprehensive sexual health education](#). However, these opt-out provisions are limited in scope. As the protection and expansion of historically accurate, diverse, and inclusive curricula in K-12 education in California has been an important focus for both AAUW CA’s School Board Project and our legislative priorities, we need to watch how the decision in *Mahmoud* may spark expanded opt-out requests on religious grounds. While protections for inclusive curricula remain in place in California, the outcome in favor of the parents in this case is likely to create a wave of costly social and legal challenges, including a call for more expansive opt-out policies, which will have an impact on how we continue to engage in meaningful work around this priority area in the future. A possible outcome of this is that many districts will pull back on their DEI materials, setting up a potential collision course with existing CA laws.

By Missy Maceyko, Co-chair AAUW California Public Policy Committee



Social Activities



Join Us for the FALL AAUW HAPPY HOUR

October 16, 5 pm - 7 pm

Mill Creek Vineyards and Winery
1401 Westside Road, Healdsburg

Bring a +1 guest

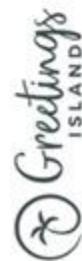
Bring appetizer to share

Bring \$\$\$ for wine purchase

RSVP with # in party to:

neitacomings@hotmail.com

Carol Hazlett, Neita Comings, Gail Burt
Happy Hour Committe



50 Years and Going Strong

Our 2025-26 annual kick-off party at the end of August got a jump start celebrating the 50th anniversary of our AAUW branch. We were joined by 9 of the 45 founding members. **Jean Short**, our first president, came from Montana and **Claire Galimba**, the first treasurer, came from Oregon. **Charlotte Garner**, the only original member to be a continuous member for 50 years, was there along with locals **Kathy Birdsong**, **Phyllis Liu**, **Julie Neumiller**, **Elizabeth Taylor**, **Jzoy Magdallen**, and **Judy Velasquez**.



Jean Short gave a brief history of how we came to be. We marveled at what we have become: almost 200 members working to fund scholarships for women and girls; improve education at all levels; and participate in mission-based programs, social activities and many interest groups.

Anna-Laura Jansma told us how the Tech Trek program for sending 8th grade girls to summer camp has expanded to the Tech Trek Alums Group (TTAG) to engage girls in year-around STEM activities throughout high school and beyond.

A huge thanks to the committee who put it all together – **Mary Newman**, **Linda Clark**, **Violet Nelson**, **Barbara Reid**, **Tom Devitt**, and **Ronnie Devitt**.



Jean Short



Claire Romero Galimba



Anna-Laura Jansma



Nancy Jane Andrews



Ronnie Devitt

Cultural Event to Safari West on September 10, 2025

29 members and a couple guests attended our last Cultural Event on September 10 to Safari West. From all the shout-outs we got afterwards, everyone had a marvelous time. We started with a delicious buffet lunch in their outdoor dining area. Safari West offers overnight lodging in their 5 star tents so a full kitchen is available.

We were then divided into groups of 10 and climbed on to our jeeps. Three or four could sit in a special area on the top that provided a great view. We then drove on many of the roads of the 400 acre preserve to see giraffes, cape buffalos, antelope, gazelles, warthogs, zebras, ostriches, a white rhinoceros and her baby (so cute), a wildebeest, a gemsbok, oryx and several more.

After our 2-hour drive we went on a walking tour of the aviary where we saw many different bird species, as well as other smaller animals. We saw lemurs, monkeys, flamingos, storks, cranes, numerous pigeons, cheetahs, and a tortoise.

Of course after our walking tour, we went to the gift shop. It was a fun and educational day. We are so fortunate to have this great wildlife preserve in our backyard.

Safari West mission statement: With a focus on conservation through education, disseminating knowledge through guest and student interactions is a top priority for us with the primary educational outlet being the safari tour. Emerging insights in the fields of wildlife biology and conservation are incorporated into our ever-evolving tour curriculum, intending to create a space for discussion and discovery

Liz Loebel and Judith Olney – Co-Chairs, Cultural Events



If you are aware of any member who is ill, has had an operation or an accident, has passed away or had a close family member pass away, please notify [Holly Schatz](#) and [Kim Alexander](#) so that a card can be sent from Healdsburg AAUW and communicate as appropriate. Email: hollypschatz@gmail.com. Phone: 415-305-4559 and kimeliza28@yahoo.com 607-342-7658.

Published monthly, except in July and August. Please submit articles and announcements in email text, Google Docs, or Word and images in .jpeg by the 15th of the month prior to the issue in which you want them included. The Grapevine is available to the general public, therefore please be cautious about including personal information. Send articles to Carrie Paulik cap53t@gmail.com