



AAUW Priorities for President Obama's FY2014 Budget

February 21, 2013

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

On behalf of the 150,000 bipartisan members and supporters of the American Association of University Women (AAUW), **I write to express AAUW's priorities for your administration's upcoming FY2014 budget proposal.** AAUW has been empowering women as individuals and as a community since 1881. For more than 130 years, we have worked together as a national grassroots organization to improve the lives of millions of women and their families. AAUW's member-adopted public policy principles support "public budgets that balance individual rights and responsibility to the community."¹

AAUW knows that between upcoming fiscal deadlines and concerns about the economy, these are difficult times to prepare a federal budget. Yet we are concerned that the demands to ruthlessly slash federal spending and deficits could weaken critical programs that benefit millions of Americans and our nation's bottom line. AAUW believes that the best way to reduce the country's deficit is to create jobs and increase revenues. AAUW is opposed to "sequestration" which imposes arbitrary and senseless cuts to education, research, healthcare, and civil rights enforcement.

AAUW strongly believes that if sequestration does occur, it must be applied equally to both defense and discretionary spending, and that cuts to non-defense discretionary spending should exclude programs that defend civil rights, protect women's health, and promote job creation and economic security.

Domestic spending has already been cut to reduce the deficit, and AAUW strongly believes future cuts must reflect this and come from other budget areas. As the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities recently pointed out, discretionary spending for domestic and international programs is on track to be cut by \$894 billion between now and 2022.² In its independent analysis, CBPP finds that there is no room to make additional domestic cuts "without threatening the government's ability to provide crucial benefits and services and perform core public functions."³

The FY2014 Budget should Defend Civil Rights

AAUW opposes all forms of discrimination and supports constitutional protection for the civil rights of all individuals,⁴ and believes a key aspect of protecting civil rights is **ensuring adequate enforcement of all civil rights laws through sufficient funding and staffing of**

federal civil rights agencies, such as the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Office of Federal Contractor Compliance Programs, and the civil rights divisions of various departments—especially the Departments of Education and Justice. AAUW urges your administration to fully fund these offices, allowing them to pursue their ambitious agendas,⁵ such as the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission’s work towards releasing regulations directing employers to collect wage data, reported by the race, sex, and national origin of employees⁶ and the Department of Labor’s Office of Federal Contractor Compliance Programs’ attempt to develop and implement a compensation data collection tool to investigate wage discrimination.⁷ In this economy, it is critical that the government make civil rights enforcement a priority because workers fear retaliation for speaking up for themselves in the workplace.¹

Additionally, AAUW urges your administration to **protect government programs designed to promote gender diversity**. We believe the administration should fund the Special Assistant for Gender Equity position at the Department of Education. The need for this position was first identified by AAUW in the early 1990s,⁸ and Congress amended the U.S. Department of Education Organization Act to create the position in 1994. Yet while the position remains in the statute, it has not been filled or funded since 2000. We believe now is the time to fund and fill this position.

A Special Assistant for Gender Equity would be critical to the Department of Education’s efforts to promote, coordinate, and evaluate gender equity programs, particularly science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education programs. A 2010 report found that environmental and social barriers—including stereotypes and gender bias—continue to block women’s full participation in STEM fields, prompting many women to leave the field entirely.⁹ Appointing a SAGE who will work on these issues will further the Department’s efforts to fight discrimination and promote women and girl’s engagement in STEM.

The FY2014 Budget should Protect Women’s Health

AAUW is committed to promoting “choice in the determination of one’s reproductive life, and increased access to health care and family planning services including expansion of patients’ rights.”¹⁰ AAUW supports programs that protect and promote women’s health, and urges your administration to **protect funding for the Title X Family Planning program**. AAUW strongly supports the Title X Family Planning program, which is critical in providing reproductive services to low-income women. Title X has a critical role to play in addressing America’s public health problems and should not be cut in any way.

The FY2014 Budget should Promote Job Creation and Economic Security

AAUW supports programs that allow Americans to improve their economic future, either through formal education or workforce training, and believes the federal government has a critical role to play in ensuring that our nation’s K-12, postsecondary, and workforce training systems are robust and open to all.

¹ This is why AAUW and many other groups call on the administration to issue an executive order forbidding federal contractors from retaliating against employees who ask questions about compensation. This order would enact a portion of the long-delayed Paycheck Fairness Act. With federal contractors and subcontractors comprising nearly a quarter of the federal civilian workforce, this order would protect millions of workers seeking equal pay for equal work.

AAUW urges your administration to **fully fund the Pell Grant program** and rescind recent changes to the program. Congress recently adopted legislation that, while protecting the maximum Pell award level, changed recipient eligibility rules by limiting the number of semesters students are eligible from 18 to 12 semesters. This change has already contributed to a decline in enrollment at community colleges in the three southern states, as many of the rural, low-income areas students who typically enroll in the states' community colleges could not afford the cost of attending without state-based financial-aid.¹¹ This change particularly hurts women—in 2007-2008, women made up 81 percent of those students who received Pell Grants for more than six years nation-wide, compared to 66 percent of those who received Pell Grants overall.¹² AAUW urges your administration to rescind the eligibility changes to the Pell program so nontraditional students can complete their degrees.

Further, AAUW also believes your administration should **protect workforce training programs that help unemployed workers retrain and find new jobs**. As our economy slowly recovers from the recent recession, many workers will need to access training to upgrade their skills to fit new demands. AAUW strongly believes that access to high-wage, high-skill jobs should be a right for women and girls from diverse racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, age, and disability backgrounds, including training for nontraditional jobs.

AAUW is committed to working for women and girls, and we look forward to working with your administration to develop and implement a budget that defends the civil rights of Americans, protects women's rights, and promotes job creation and economic security. Please do not hesitate to contact me at 202/785-7720, or Erin Prangley, associate director of government relations, at 202/785-7730, if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Lisa M. Maatz
Director, Public Policy and Government Relations

cc: The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius
The Honorable Arne Duncan
The Honorable Eric Holder
The Honorable Seth D. Harris, Acting Secretary and Deputy
Cecilia Munoz, Director of the White House Domestic Policy Council
Valerie Jarrett, Chair of the White House Council on Women & Girls
Tina Tchen, Executive Director of the White House Council on Women & Girls

¹ American Association of University Women. (June 2011). *2011-13 AAUW Public Policy Program*. Retrieved January 31, 2013, from www.aauw.org/act/issue_advocacy/principles_priorities.cfm

² Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. (September 25, 2012). *Congress Has Cut Discretionary Funding by \$1.5 Trillion Over Ten Years*. Retrieved December 10, 2012, from www.cbpp.org/files/9-25-12bud.pdf

³ Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. (December 6, 2012). *Non-Defense Discretionary Programs Will Face Serious Pressures Under Current Funding Caps*. Retrieved December 10, 2012, from www.cbpp.org/files/12-4-12bud.pdf

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ U.S. Department of Labor. (December 24, 2012). *Semiannual Regulatory Agenda - Fall 2012*. Retrieved February 1, 2013, from www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=DOL-2012-0008

⁶ The Federal Register. (October 27, 2011). *Agency Information Collection Activities; Submission for OMB Review; Comment Request; Construction Recordkeeping and Reporting; Vol. 76, No. 208*. Retrieved December 20, 2011, from www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2011-10-27/pdf/2011-27840.pdf

⁷ The Federal Register. (August 10, 2011). *Volume 76, Number 154*. Retrieved December 20, 2011, from www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2011-08-10/pdf/2011-20299.pdf

⁸ Education Week. (September 1994). *Idea of 'Gender Gap' in Schools Under Attack*. Retrieved February 1, 2013, from www.edweek.org/ew/articles/1994/09/28/04gender.h14.html

⁹ AAUW. (2010). *Why So Few?* Retrieved February 1, 2013, from www.aauw.org/learn/research/whysofew.cfm

¹⁰ American Association of University Women. (June 2011). *2011-13 AAUW Public Policy Program*. Retrieved December 20, 2011, from www.aauw.org/act/issue_advocacy/principles_priorities.cfm

¹¹ Inside Higher Ed. (February 13, 2013). *Students in South Hit Hard by Pell Changes*. Retrieved February 21, 2013, from www.insidehighered.com/quicktakes/2013/02/13/students-south-hit-hard-pell-changes#ixzz2LYKvf3tz

¹² U.S. Department of Education. (2008). National Center for Education Statistics, *NPSAS:2008 Undergraduate Students*. Retrieved December 21, 2011, from <http://nces.ed.gov/dasolv2/tables/mainPage.asp?mode=NEW&filenumber=51>