

AAUW has evolved into many things over the past 125 years. We have made historic gains for women and girls, yet it appears that we have lost our focus and our vision. We must continue to support the philanthropy of our giving, our interest groups, and the friendships and camaraderie that evolve from our interactions at the branch and state levels. However, it is imperative that we address our mission, which continues to be “advancing equity for all women and girls.” Thus, every month I wish to address a topic that will remind us that our mission can and must “matter in our communities.” We are strong, intelligent, and committed individuals, who can make a difference.

This communication will discuss Title IX. Can you believe that it has been 35 years since it became law? Can you believe the strides that we have made in the ensuing years? Do not most of us think of “athletics” when we hear the nomenclature?

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 is the federal statute prohibiting sex discrimination in the education programs and activities that receive federal funding. Although Title IX goes far beyond athletics, we must tout the courage and diligence of “Communities for Equity” with Diane Madsen and her cohorts at the helm, and their nine year effort to “equalize the playing field” for all girls in Michigan in the sports arena. This is a significant piece of Title IX.

However, Title IX affects all areas of education. It has enabled women to pursue careers as lawyers, doctors, mechanics, scientists, as well as professional athletes. Title IX applies to institutions and educational program receiving federal funds and addresses these crucial areas:

- Access and admission to higher education
- Career and technical education
- Education for pregnant and parenting students
- Equity in math, science, and technology education
- Sexual Harassment
- Athletics

But Title IX has not resolved all of the issues that exist for women and girls in terms of equity. Consider the challenges that we still face:

- Sexual harassment remains pervasive in public schools—83% of girls and 79% of boys surveyed have experienced it.
- Sex segregation persists in career education with more than 90% of girls clustered in training programs for the traditionally female fields of health, teaching, graphic arts, and office technology.
- Women’s teams receive only 33% of recruiting dollars and 39% of athletic dollars.
- Women receive only 20% of computer science and engineering related technology bachelor’s degrees.
- Pregnant students are steered toward separate and less academically rigorous schools.

So after all of this rhetoric you may be asking what can I do? Be informed, write a letter to your local newspaper, tell a friend or family member, assist in developing a project or program for your local branch. Stoke the passion for equity!!