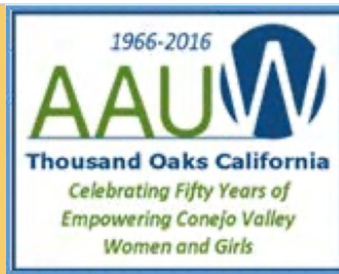
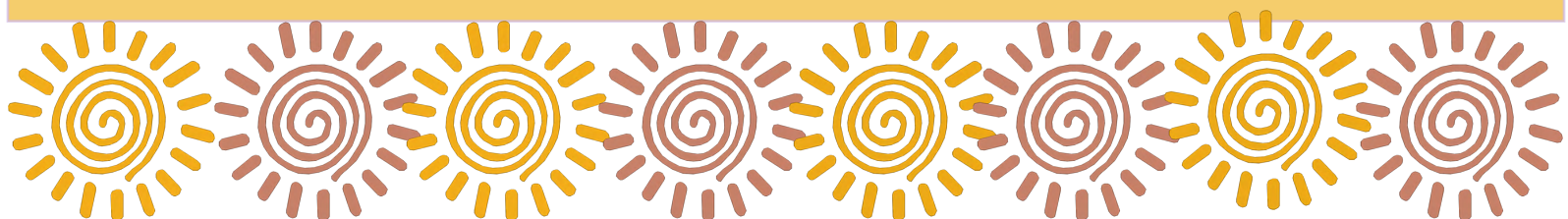


# The Oak Twig



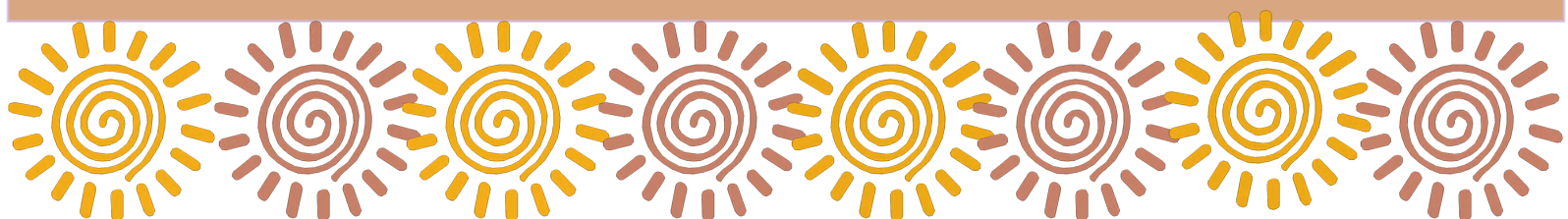
**SUMMER 2023**



# PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE - PEGGY BUCKLES

Women and marginalized communities including children continue to be attacked both nationally and locally. We, as an organization, strive for equality and justice for all. Though we have made gains in this area in the past, our nation is taking steps backwards. Just this month, the Equal Rights Amendment was voted down in the Senate even though 38 states have ratified it. Rights that women have had for years have been stripped away by the Supreme Court in spite of former rulings. Voting rights for many are being suppressed. While this is both challenging and depressing, we cannot give up the fight. We must find ways to work with our allies to restore our rights and enact laws to ensure future generations don't have to fight the battles we have fought since the early 1900s. There is no other option. We need to work with like-minded people to find qualified women candidates to run for office, back them financially and work to get them elected. We need to advocate for ourselves by meeting with our legislators in person. We must protest to make our representatives understand that we will not allow them to take our rights away nor will we quietly go back to being house bound baby incubators. If that means we need to make noise and march, then we must do whatever it takes!

Over the summer our Board of Directors and Public Policy committee will be planning activities, programs and speakers for the coming year. If you have thoughts on activities that you would be interested in pursuing, please get in touch with one of us. We are open to hearing your ideas. None of us ever dreamed we would need to work like the Suffragists did, but I know that this dedicated group is willing to register people to vote, write postcards encouraging people to go to the polls, and support candidates who will restore our rights. Future generations of women are counting on us. We must not fail.





# SPRING LUNCHEON



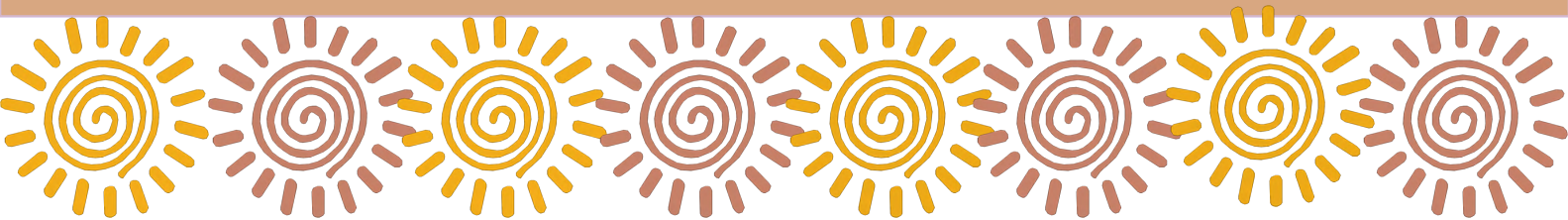
Diversity and Spring are very beautiful!

AAUW Thousand Oaks  
Spring Luncheon  
Saturday, May 20th 10:30am

Los Robles Greens, 299 S. Moorpark Rd.  
Thousand Oaks

\$40.00 per person  
Registrations DUE by May 10th

Keynote Speaker:  
Cheryl Farrell



# WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

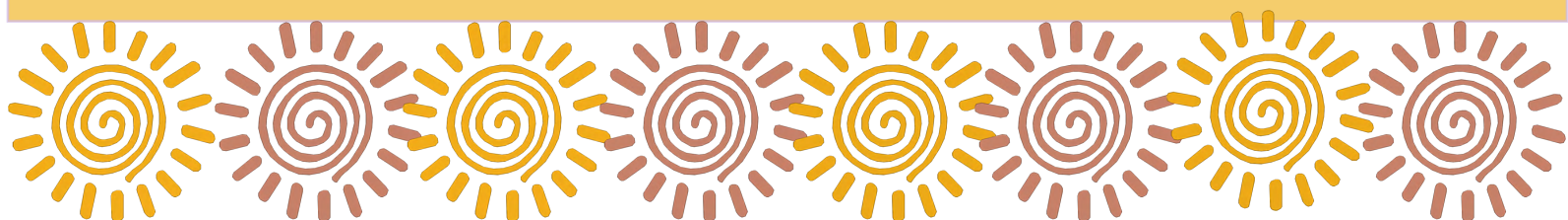
Dr. Sakeena Ali is an educator and a lifelong learner. Her goals are to empower those in need and help others reach their highest potential.

She has been working the education field for 20+ years and has experience with all ages and backgrounds. Her experience working with international students in the US inspires her to continue to learn about others. Her background studying abroad, working in the US and overseas, and visiting 30+ countries brings a unique perspective to her work.

Dr. Ali received her Ed.D. in educational leadership from California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, while she was simultaneously working there full-time as an Academic Coordinator for the English Language Institute on campus. Her doctoral research focused on building professional learning communities within educational organizations to better achievements of students, faculty, and staff.

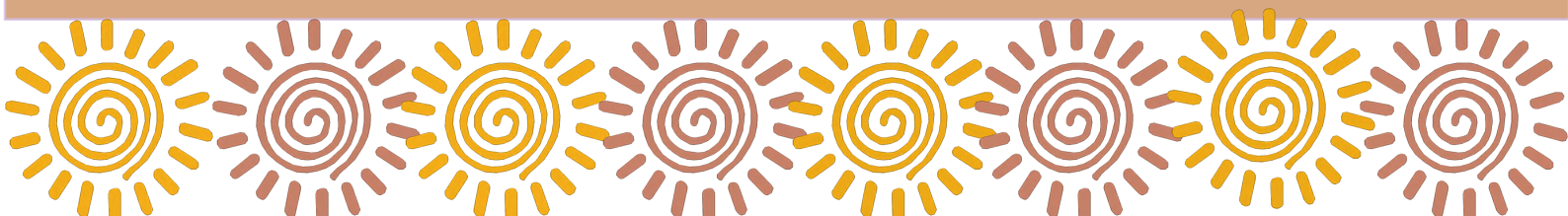
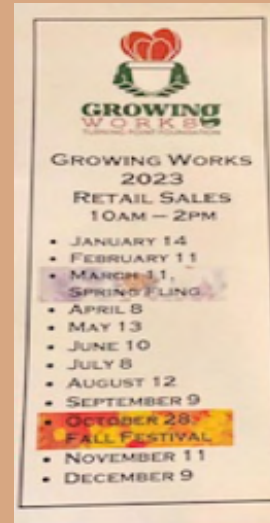
Growing up with immigrant parents who began their life adventures by moving across the globe gave Dr. Ali the enthusiasm to embrace all that life has to offer. She earned a B.A. in human development and history, with a minor in education, at UC San Diego, where she studied abroad on Semester at Sea. She met people from around the world and learned about their cultures. After graduating, she continued to work internationally, teaching English language skills to cruise ship workers. She subsequently served in Peace Corps Ukraine and completed a TESOL Master's International degree through American University. Shortly after serving she was an English language fellow in Turkey for two years. She has presented at many English Language Teaching (ELT) conferences and has been asked to facilitate workshops in the US and abroad.

Dr. Ali's love for people and cultures around the world brought her back to Peace Corps, where she helps others gain the opportunity to see and better understand the world they live in. In October 2017, she began as a field-based Senior Recruiter for the Los Angeles area, including San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura County. In this role, she presents Peace Corps opportunities through class talks, panel discussions, information sessions, and other events in order to encourage those who have a passion to serve disadvantaged communities abroad. She also meets with individuals to help them through the application process and at times acts as a career mentor. Additionally, she works as a staging facilitator, preparing departing volunteers for an extraordinary two years of service abroad.



# GROWING WORKS

We were a small group who benefitted greatly from a wonderful visit to Growing Works in Camarillo on Saturday, April 29. Eloda Linehan, Peggy Buckles, Wendy Hoffman, plus her friend, Sally Hibbitts, Joan Edwards, Jean Maxwell, along with new member Joanne Flahive carpooled to the facility where we received an excellent introduction to the unique business model Growing Works provides. A tour of the growing fields and continued information about their uniquely supportive work facility for Ventura County residents dealing with mental illness. The best part was shopping for fabulous drought tolerant and native species. If you were unable to make this outing, it is strongly recommended that you visit Growing Works on Lewis Road, near CSUCI, as soon as possible! It provides support for their wonderful program, but visitors can view a wide variety of unique native plants that they have available. Please be sure to check ahead for their public open days.





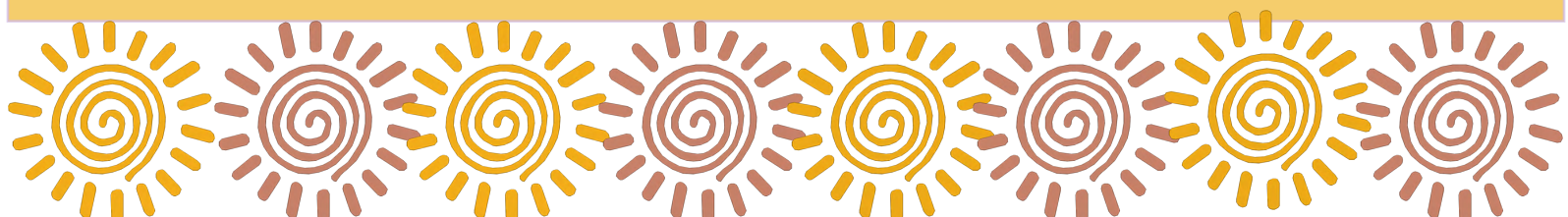
# TECH TREK

Thousand Oaks AAUW is very proud to present our newest campers for the STEM program called Tech Trek. There are two camps which these girls will be attending this summer live in person camp will be held at UCSB, in late July and also at the same time the Robotics Virtual Camp will be held.

We had twenty one applicants this year, which was an indicator of the success of our program and our outreach to CVUSD. All applicants were nominated by their STEM teachers and principals. They then completed a multi page online document, including short answer questions and a longer essay. These applications were screened and then the girls all experienced an in person group interview on a Sunday afternoon.

Special thanks to our members and helpers who assisted with this major task: Nancy Taylor-Walker, Peggy Buckles, Sally Hibbitts, Melanie Weerasinghe, and our Tech Trek alum Dennise Arriaza.

AAUW members will be making a visit to the UCSB Tech Trek Camp tentatively scheduled for Thursday, July 20. If you are interested in joining us for a lovely day in Santa Barbara and lunch out, please contact Sally Hibbitts at [sjhibbitts@aol.com](mailto:sjhibbitts@aol.com). All are welcome to join us, and we will be arranging carpools.



# TECH TREK

## PRESENTING AAUW THOUSAND OAKS SELECTED TECH TREK CMPERS SUMMER 2023

The following girls were selected for the in-person camp at UCSB:



Darrelle Cruz- Castro  
Colina



Isabella Shokhkomyan  
Colina



Jade Cruz  
Colina



Amy Tapia  
Sequoia



Smrithi Baradwaj  
Los Cerritos



Autumn Santana  
Redwood

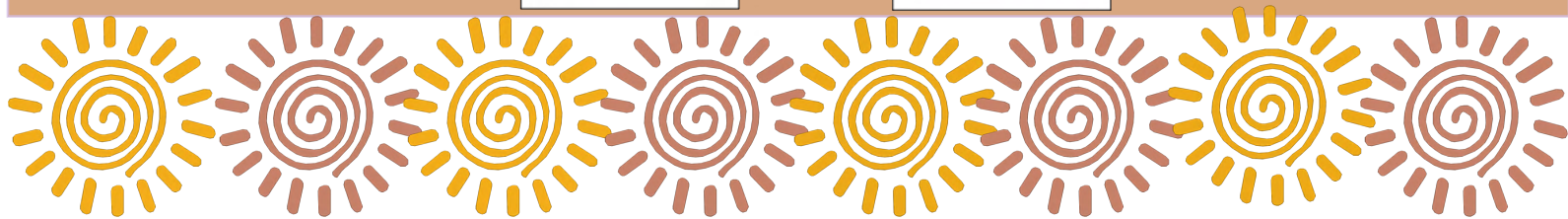
The following girls were selected for the Robotics Virtual Camp:



Daenerys Carolan  
Sequoia



Erica Norman  
Sycamore Canyon



# MEMBERSHIP - RENEWAL

## ATTENTION: RENEW YOUR DUES

Please mail a check for \$112 (AAUW TO) to:

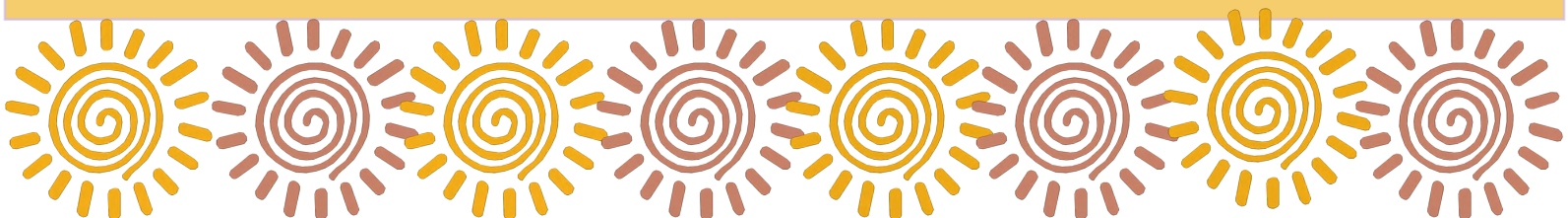
AAUW – Membership  
P.O. Box 4223  
Thousand Oaks, CA 91359

Most dues need to be mailed before June 30, 2023.  
If you joined recently, the date you joined will be your renewal date.

To join online, go to:  
[www.aauwthousandoaks.com](http://www.aauwthousandoaks.com)

or

[aauw.org](http://aauw.org) and go to the log in page  
Questions? Call or text Eloda at (310) 809-0926.



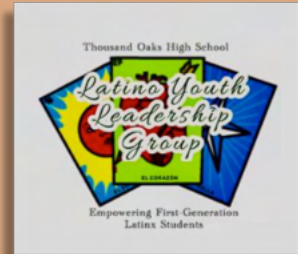


# LATINO YOUTH LEADERSHIP

## LATINO YOUTH LEADERSHIP GROUP NEWS!

The AAUW TO Branch created and supported program called, Latino Youth Leadership Group, held a special event in conjunction with our co-sponsor, Thousand Oaks High School, on Friday April 28. It was a Middle School Conference for Future Latino Lancers! AAUW members Sandra Martinez, Betty Stapleford, Peggy Buckles, Nancy Taylor Walker, Sharri Lear, Dorothy Hatfield, Betsy Connolly, Rossanna Guerra, Lisa Powell, Paula Nathan, and the family of Danielle Blum all helped create this wonderful event! With apologies if anyone was accidentally left off this long list.

Special thanks to these members who supported this event in many ways including time, financial support, and food donations.



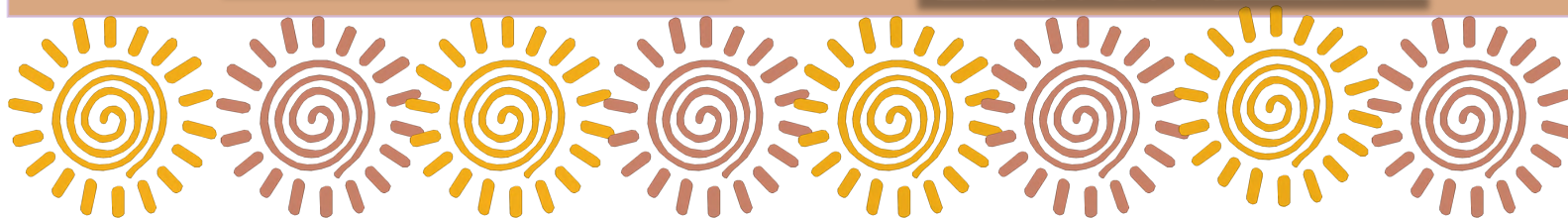
**FUTURE LATINO LANCERS CONFERENCE**

APRIL 28, 2023  
For 7th and 8th grade students

- Tour of programs and classes
- Explore methods of leading
- Meet high school mentors
- Fun activities with your friends
- Live performances
- Free Latino food
- During school day

AAUW  
Thousand Oaks, CA Branch

Ask Ms. Musgrove in room 14 for more information  
All welcome regardless of future high school



# LGBTQIA+ EDUCATIONAL

## LGBTQIA+ PRIDE MONTH EDUCATIONAL FORUM



### GENDER 101 SEMINAR

**TUESDAY, JUNE 20<sup>TH</sup>, 7PM VIA ZOOM**

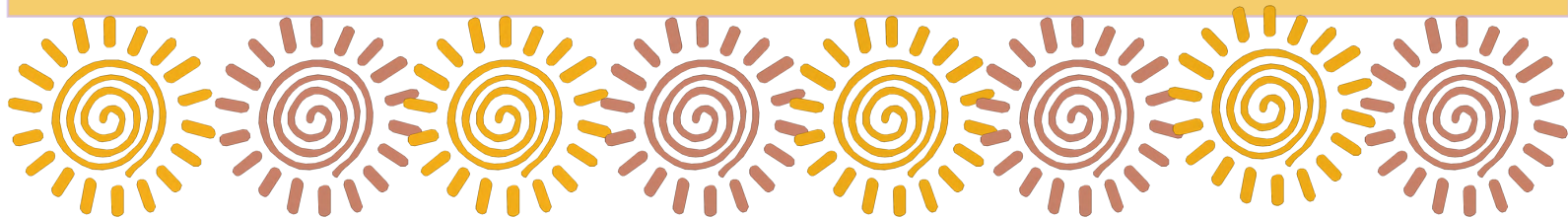
THIS SEMINAR IS GEARED TOWARDS CISGENDER FOLKS WHO WOULD LIKE TO BECOME MORE COMPETENT IN UNDERSTANDING GENDER IN GENERAL, AS WELL AS THE EXPERIENCES OF TRANS AND GENDER NON-CONFORMING PEOPLE. THE STYLE OF THE TRAINING IS LECTURE, EDUCATION, DISCUSSION, AND Q&AS. DURING THIS SEMINAR YOU WILL LEARN: THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN GENDER IDENTITY, GENDER EXPRESSION, SEX ASSIGNED AT BIRTH, PHYSICAL ATTRACTION, AND EMOTIONAL ATTRACTION; UNDERSTAND DIFFERENT PRONOUNS AND WAYS TO USE THESE PRONOUNS IN A SENTENCE; IDENTIFY WAYS TO SUPPORT AND ADVOCATE FOR LGBTQ+ PEOPLE IN YOUR LIFE; AND IDENTIFY SPECIFIC RESOURCES FOR FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING REGARDING GENDER.

Presented by: Alex Lee Rhodes, LCSW (they/them) is a trans non-binary queer therapist in private practice. They serve as the Director of Youth Engagement for the GLSEN Los Angeles chapter. They earned a Bachelor's degree in Women, Gender, & Sexuality Studies from Washington University in St. Louis in 2016, and a Master's in Social Welfare degree from UCLA in 2018. Alex provided direct mental

health services to adults and adolescents in a variety of community mental health clinics before transitioning to private practice. Their practice is geared towards LGBTQ+ youth and navigating identity and relationships.



**Please RSVP to Cindy Speakman, Chair of the DEI Committee for AAUWTO, no later than Friday, June 14<sup>th</sup>, via email at: [cindyspeakman@gmail.com](mailto:cindyspeakman@gmail.com). A Zoom link will be provided.**





# AAUW ACTION



Dear Gender Equity Advocates,

We are still early in the 118th Congress and it has already been an eventful few months demonstrating why AAUW continues to fight for strong policies to advance women's equity and education. There are ongoing attacks on access to reproductive health, transgender youth, and even a failed U.S. Senate vote on the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA)!

However, there is also so much to be excited about. Last month, AAUW announced that we are awarding \$6.3 million in fellowships and grants to 285 exceptional awardees, continuing our commitment as one of the largest funders of women's graduate education. We will also bring together hundreds of college women from around the country for leadership, advocacy training and networking for our [National Conference for College Women Student Leaders \(NCCWSL\)](#) in just a few weeks. And we are working with Congress to support women's economic empowerment and continuing the fight for ERA.

As AAUW's new policy director, I look forward to working alongside you in support of women's equity!

Meghan Kissell  
Senior Director of Policy and Member Advocacy

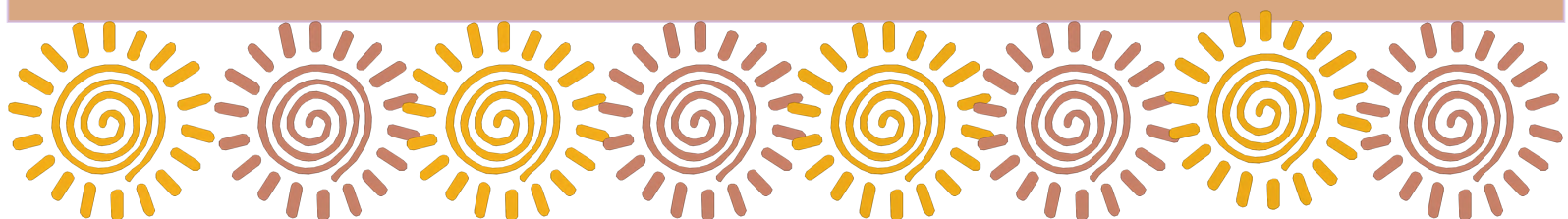
## **Act** — *Take action on the most pressing policies*

Last week, Julie Su's nomination to be the next U.S. Secretary of Labor advanced out of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee. AAUW supported Ms. Su's previous confirmation as the Deputy Secretary of Labor in 2021, and believes she is [the best choice for the position of U.S. Secretary of Labor](#) to achieve an inclusive economy.

### **Julie Su represents the best of America.**

Ms. Su spent decades of her career advancing gender equity and economic security for women and families. She has achieved significant expansions on state gender pay equity laws, paid sick leave protections, labor rights for childcare and farm workers, and workplace sexual harassment and violence prevention. As the country works towards economic recovery, Ms. Su will work to ensure that this brighter future includes everyone.

[As her candidacy nears a final vote, urge your senator to support Julie Su's confirmation!](#)





# AAUW ACTION



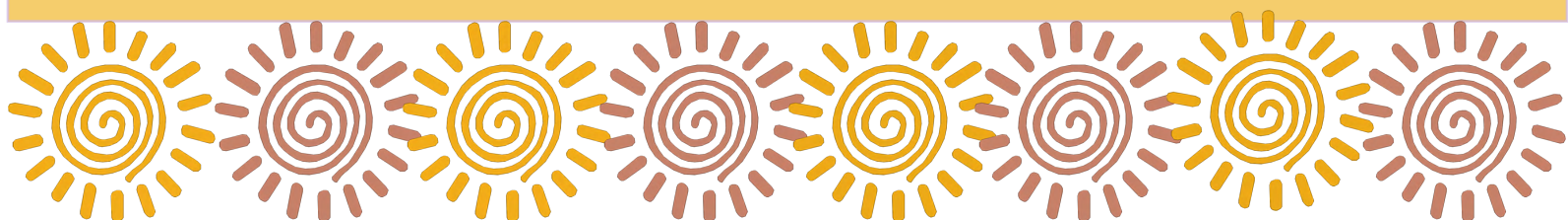
## Learn — *Dig deeper into the issues that matter*

For more than 50 years, Title IX has prohibited sex discrimination in education, covering both staff and students in any educational institution or program that receives federal funds. The Biden-Harris Administration has worked on two sets of proposed rule changes to Title IX. In June 2022, the U.S. Department of Education proposed rules to restore students' protections against sexual harassment, affirm protections for LGBTQ+ students, strengthen supports for pregnant and parenting students. AAUW provided [public comment](#) in support of these changes and recently called on the Administration to finalize the rules before the end of this school year.

In April, the U.S. Department of Education proposed a separate Title IX rule affirming the rights of all students, including transgender, nonbinary, and intersex students, to participate fully and equally in school sports without discriminatory rules. The rule would prohibit schools from categorically banning transgender students from participating in sports consistent with their gender identity. If properly implemented and applied, it would mean that the 21 states with blanket bans prohibiting transgender students from playing on sports consistent with their gender identity would be in violation of Title IX. AAUW is working with partners to [submit comments to strengthen the proposed rule](#). Comments are open until May 15.

In April, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a [bill](#) intended to ban transgender women and girls in school sports. While the bill is unlikely to pass the Senate, President Biden stated he would veto any such bill if it should pass Congress. These attacks on transgender rights are thinly veiled efforts to undermine and erode civil rights protections.

AAUW has supported Title IX since its passage nearly 50 years ago, and we continue to fight against gender-based discrimination on behalf of all people today. To learn more, check out our 2022 webinar with GLSEN and the Women's Law Project on [Title IX and transgender student rights](#).

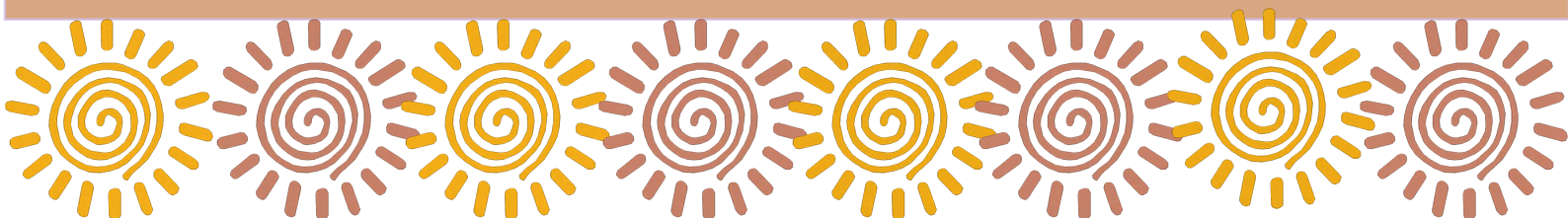




# AAUW ACTION

## Engage — *Share the important work we're doing*

- Last week, the U.S. Senate voted to remove the arbitrary deadline for ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment (S.J. Res. 4/H.J. Res. 25) as the 28th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Due to the nature of this vote, it would have required a two-thirds majority to pass. While the vote failed to meet the 60-vote threshold to pass, Senate Majority Leader Schumer entered a vote to reconsider so the issue can be voted on again later this session. Help keep up momentum by signing this [nationwide petition](#) in support of the Equal Rights Amendment.
- Members of the House and Senate will be back in their districts during this month's congressional work periods—a great opportunity to build relationships with your legislators and cultivate your influence on the issues that matter most to you. Watch the latest webinar with the AAUW Public Policy Committee and Lobby Corps on [How to Engage with Elected Officials](#) and use AAUW's [resource guide](#) to inform your advocacy.
- As we celebrate Mother's Day, AAUW continues to advocate for critical supports for working mothers and families including child care, paid family and medical leave, and paid sick days. On April 18, President Biden signed an [executive order](#) directing federal agencies to make childcare more accessible and affordable and to enhance job quality for early care workers and educators supported through federal grant programs.
- Access to a full range of reproductive health services, including abortion care, enhances an individual's reproductive choices—which leads to improvements in women's health care and economic security. Earlier this year, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration was [sued](#) over its approval of mifepristone, safe, effective medication commonly used in medication abortions. On April 21, the Supreme Court granted a stay allowing mifepristone to remain on the market as the case continues to move through the Fifth Circuit and Supreme Court.
- May is Older Americans Month. Older workers face particular forms of discrimination that limit their ability to earn a paycheck, and women are more vulnerable than men as they reach retirement due to a lifelong pay gap. On March 29, the AAUW-supported Protecting Older Workers Against Discrimination Act (S.1030) was reintroduced, which would give older workers the tools to battle age discrimination and continue to take home a fair wage.
- Sign up as a [Two-Minute Activist](#) today and keep up to date on our policy work with our [letters, comments, testimony and legal briefs](#) to learn more about AAUW's positions and advocacy efforts.





# COFFEE & CHAT

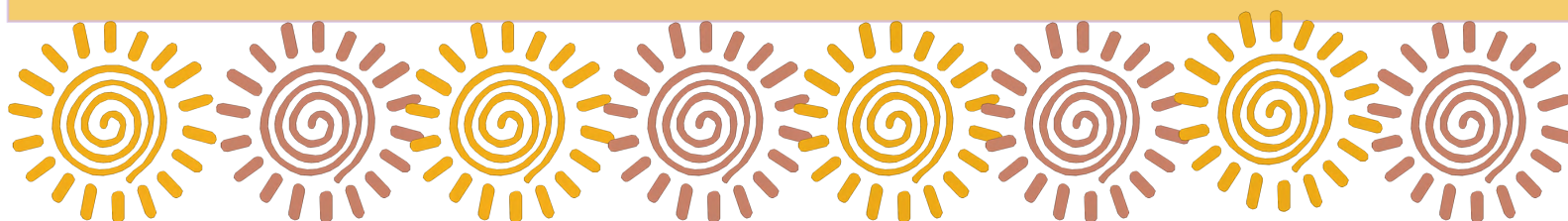
Dates: June 3rd, 2023, July 1st, 2023 & August 5th, 2023  
Time: 9:30 to 11 a.m.

Casual conversation with AAUW members and friends



## PUBLIC POLICY

Each month we meet for discussion and planned actions in line with our AAUW values. Some of our recent topics have been: The T.O. City Council and its DEI and Districting actions, Gun Violence Control, Title IX and our Transgender Athletes, Diversity Equity and Inclusion, CVUSD School Board challenges with local detractors, the Elevated Donations limit for Ventura County Supervisor Candidates, and other important issues. If you would like to be a part of this vital group, please contact Betty Stapleford at [bstaple4d@gmail.com](mailto:bstaple4d@gmail.com) or 805-630-8117





# REMEMBERING PHYLLIS MAE BENSON



## PHYLLIS MAE BENSON

September 16, 1926 – March 24, 2023

Phyllis Mae Benson was born in San Bernardino, California to Harry and Amy Kutzman. Phyllis grew up in the San Fernando Valley. In her late teens she joined the USO to support the troops during WWII. She loved dancing with the soldiers at the USO socials. She married Walter Benson in 1947. In 1959 the family moved to Thousand Oaks. She was in two Conejo Valley Days Parades. Her slogan "Fun and Play the Conejo Way" was selected as the theme one year. Phyllis earned a master's degree at San Fernando Valley State College while raising three boys. She taught math and art at Hale Middle School for 38 years. She was a docent at the Museum of Ventura County and the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History. She was an avid artist. Her outdoor adventures included camping, scuba diving, bird watching and traveling. Phyllis joined the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary in 1977. She was active close to 40 years and held many positions, including Captain of a local flotilla. She was well respected for her dedication.



Phyllis was 96 when she passed away peacefully. She is survived by her son Gregory, her son Ken, his wife Becky, their daughter Michele, their son Eric, his wife Kristin and their children (Caleb, Isaac, Abby and Eli), her son Larry, his wife Lia, their son Austin, their daughter Sima, life partner Ryan and their daughter Redding.

Phyllis was a remarkable and adventuresome person. She will be dearly missed and never, ever, forgotten.

