

Capitol Report

January 12, 2023

By Mary Pollock, AAUWMI Government Relations Coordinator

In the political world, the beginning of odd-numbered years like 2023 also means new policy makers at all levels of government and consequently new political dynamics.

Ceremonial inauguration of our statewide elected leaders occurred outdoors on the east side of the State Capitol on January 1 to many speeches and a 19-cannon burst salute in balmy 35-degree, cloudy weather to an audience of about a thousand people. The Governor in her acceptance speech hinted at some of her priorities likely to get a warmer welcome from the Democratic majorities just elected to both the Michigan House and Senate in the new 102nd Legislature.

Yet two newly elected House Democrats have already decided to run for their local mayoral vacancies in November putting the House 56 -54 Democratic voting majority in jeopardy later this year. On January 5, Michigan U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow announced that she is ending her 50-year elective office career and not running for re-election in 2024, an action likely to set up a cascading series of vacancies among current Congressional and/or state officeholders.

State legislators returned January 11 – State legislators have been preparing for their official inauguration since their election on November 8. They began moving into their physical offices on January 1 and began their official duties on January 11 by being sworn in and formally electing leadership and introducing the first bills. The Legislature will be in session Tuesday – Thursday most of the year including a week in July and August. Lawmakers are scheduled to meet 110 times in 2023, up from 86 days last year. Some Committee restructuring and renaming has occurred due to the Democratic control of both chambers with different priorities than the former Republican majority.

New AAUW directories of the 2023-24 House and Senate with their name, district number, email address, office phone number, and office physical address can be found on the AAUWMI Web site [here](#). The directories can be used to copy and paste all legislator email addresses into one email from an AAUW member about a public policy issue of interest to AAUWMI.

Early legislative Committee meetings in January and February are often tutorials on the issues facing the legislative committee and can be very interesting if you want to watch on the Senate or House TV channels at www.legislature.mi.gov. This Website is the go-to Web site for all information about our legislature and links to other important state government functions.

Legislature profile – Of the 148 Michigan lawmakers (110 House members and 38 Senators):

- 40 percent of both the Michigan House and Senate are women
- 54 House members (49 percent) are entirely new state legislators; 55 percent of the Senate are new to the Senate though only four (13 percent) are new state legislators
- 52 percent of House members and 45 percent of the Senate have local government and education backgrounds
- 17 Lawmakers are former teachers
- 25 come from the business sector
- 13 have a military background
- 12 come from agriculture

- 80 percent of House members and 90 percent of the Senate have a college education and one-third of those have an advanced degree beyond college.
- There are seven members of the LGBT community in both chambers
- There are 17 Black members, down from the 20 who served in the last term.
- 47 percent of all members are between 41 and 60 years old and 18 percent are over the age of sixty.

SOS and budget presentation – Governor Gretchen Whitmer’s **State of the State Address** will be in person for the first time since 2020 on the evening of **Wednesday, January 25**. It will be held in the State House Chambers in front of a joint session of the Michigan House of Representatives and the Michigan Senate and broadcast live throughout the state on TV, radio, and streaming on the Governor’s YouTube channel.

Her budget message will be presented in early February, taking into account the agreement among the House and Senate Fiscal Agencies and the Budget Office of the Governor at the Consensus Revenue Estimating Conference held on January 13. State law requires a balanced budget in Michigan. There is about \$1 billion still available in federal pandemic assistance that should ease some of the disagreements over spending priorities.

FOLLOW UP ON LAME DUCK

The Michigan Legislature only met three days after the November 8 election, the shortest lame duck session in recent history. There was a rush to pass a few bills to get on the Governor’s desk for various reasons – some by Republicans to embarrass Democrats or the Governor and some bi-partisan public policy improvements.

PAs and vetoes – The Governor signed 278 Public Acts in 2022 and 344 total for the 101st Legislature. This is the fewest since online records began with the 1999-2000 term. The Governor vetoed 76 bills during the 101st Legislature and that tops the 54 bills she vetoed during the 2019-20 legislative term, the 67 former Governor Rick Snyder vetoed during the 2017-18 term, the 69 then-Governor Jennifer Granholm vetoed during the 2003-04 term, and the 72 Granholm vetoed in the 2005-06 term.

Child marriage ban bills – Of interest to the AAUW was a last-minute effort by the Senate to move out of Committee the Senate bills to end child marriage, measures AAUWMI supported through membership over the last several years in a broad coalition of organizations dedicated to this single purpose legislation. A bipartisan bill package to raise the age to marry in Michigan to age 18 without exceptions for parental or judicial approval was reported from the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety on November 29 after 15 minutes of testimony. Women who were married while still minors testified and urged an end to child marriages at the Senate Committee hearing. The bills were SB 1114, SB 1115, SB 1116, SB 1117, SB 1118, SB 1119, SB 1120, SB 1121, SB 1122, and SB 1123. Each bill in the package was quickly reported 8-0.

While the bills moved through committee, they did not get taken up by the full Senate and therefore did not move to the House. The bills must be reintroduced in the 102nd Legislature and start the process all over again.

At the committee hearing, Fraidy Reiss, founder and executive director of Unchained at Last, a national group working to ban child marriage in all 50 states and internationally, was among the child marriage survivors who spoke during the committee hearing. She said minors, usually girls, who are

entered into a marriage with an adult often have no input in the decision and have little or no legal recourse.

She testified that domestic violence shelters cannot take in minors seeking to leave their marriage because the facility and staff could face charges for harboring a juvenile runaway. Retaining an attorney can be difficult if not impossible for a minor due to contracts with minors being voidable.

Reiss said a significant reason to pass the package is to end a "nightmarish legal trap" for minors who are married off to adults. "Marriage before 18 is a human rights abuse," Reiss said. "It destroys almost every aspect of a girl's life and her health or education or economic opportunities, even her physical safety." The odds of experiencing sexual violence within such a marriage is higher, Reiss added.

Seven other states have passed similar legislation: Delaware, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island.

Two other survivors of child marriage also testified and echoed many of the same comments as Reiss. One of the women, Nina Van Harn, filed a successful lawsuit to annul her marriage several years ago and has since been an advocate to end child marriages. Another woman said abuse by her husband began shortly after being married at 17 and went on for 23 years until she finally escaped the marriage.

FIRST DAY BILL INTRODUCTIONS

The House and Senate Democrats orchestrated a dramatic display of their top priority bills on the first day of session, January 11. Most of the bills are likely consistent with AAUW's Public Policy Priorities (see those with *). Introduced were:

[HB 4001 of 2023](#) Individual income tax: retirement or pension benefits; limitations and restrictions on deductions of certain retirement or pension benefits and revenue distribution to state school aid fund; revise.

[HB 4002 of 2023](#) Individual income tax: credit; earned income tax credit; restore.*

[HB 4003 of 2023](#) Civil rights: general discrimination; sexual orientation and gender identity or expression; include as categories protected under the Elliott-Larsen civil rights act.*

[HB 4004 of 2023](#) Labor: collective bargaining; requirement for agency fee for nonunion members; allow in bargaining agreements and as condition of employment in public sector.*

[HB 4005 of 2023](#) Labor: collective bargaining; collective bargaining rights; revise to restore former provisions.*

[HB 4006 of 2023](#) Crimes: abortion; penalty for administering with intent to procure miscarriage; repeal.*

[HB 4007 of 2023](#) Labor: hours and wages; prevailing wage; reenact.*

[SB 0001 of 2023](#) Individual income tax: retirement or pension benefits; limitations and restrictions on deductions of certain retirement or pension benefits and revenue distribution to state school aid fund; revise.

[SB 0002 of 2023](#) Crimes: abortion; provision related to publication of cures for conceptive preventatives; repeal.*

- [SB 0003 of 2023](#) Individual income tax: credit; earned income tax credit; increase.*
- [SB 0004 of 2023](#) Civil rights: general discrimination; sexual orientation and gender identity or expression; include as categories protected under the Elliott-Larsen civil rights act.*
- [SB 0005 of 2023](#) Labor: collective bargaining; requirement for agency fee for nonunion members; allow in bargaining agreements and as condition of employment in public sector.*
- [SB 0006 of 2023](#) Labor: hours and wages; prevailing wage; reenact.*

These additional bills were introduced and are of interest to AAUWMI:

- [HB 4010 of 2023](#) Sales tax: exemptions; weapon safety devices; exempt.
- [SB 0009 of 2023](#) Individual income tax: deductions; definition of dependent; include fetus.
- [SB 0012 of 2023](#) Education: elementary; requirements related to the retention of certain grade 3 pupils; modify.

AAUWMI VIRTUAL LOBBY CORPS

The AAUW of Michigan Virtual Lobby Corps has been meeting monthly (except for December) on the **third Thursday of the month at 7 p.m. by Zoom** to discuss and share federal and state public policy issues of interest to AAUW and report on local branch public policy activities.

We have occasional presenters join us such as our November guest, Susan Demas, Publisher of Michigan Advance, a free digital newsletter that covers Michigan state government news.

The Lobby Corps is open to all AAUW members and will continue to meet virtually in 2023 at this link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86342455027?pwd=aGdUNzhMQjhPendJalRoUIBhaGtGdz09> or this phone number - 312 626 6799 (toll charges apply), meeting ID: 863 4245 5027; passcode: 574916.

Public policy is going to be very exciting this year with the 102nd Legislature majority highly committed to women's rights issues usually consistent with the AAUW national Public Policy Priorities.

Help us grow our influence by urging other AAUW members to get on the Virtual Lobby Corps mailing list by letting them know of our existence and letting me know of their email address. Also, the AAUWMI Lobby Corps Facebook closed group is where I post breaking news and relevant articles from national and state media almost daily so, please Friend our [Facebook group](#).

MICHIGAN ELECTION RESULTS & WHAT'S NEXT

On **Tuesday, January 24, 7:00 p.m. EST via Zoom**, the Midland AAUW has invited me to present "**Michigan Election Results & What's Next**" that will be shared statewide with all other branches. Pre-registration is required. Contact [Carol Arnosky](#) for more information.

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