

## November Public Policy Highlights

### AAUW Morton Branch Meeting

## **The Day After: 8 Takeaways from the 2014 Midterm:**

### **November 05, 2014**

The midterm election of 2014 is finally over — well, mostly. There will be a December runoff in the Louisiana U.S. Senate race, and the Virginia U.S. Senate race may be headed for a Thanksgiving recount. But truly, there weren't too many surprises, despite the unprecedented — and quite frankly worrisome — amount of money spent this cycle. These are the takeaways I'm still mulling over.

### **Republicans take control of the U.S. Senate.**

**Go more in depth:** AAUW Vice President of Government Relations Lisa Maatz discussed the midterm election and more in a day-after conference call with members. But now you can listen to it on YouTube too!

**AAUW-supported ballot initiatives did well.** Measures to increase the minimum wage were **successful** in four states, plus Illinois voters said they supported raising the minimum wage, and all did so with healthy majorities. We also saw a third state, Massachusetts, pass a paid sick days **measure** pretty handily. And anti-choice initiatives were **rejected** in Colorado and North Dakota. This is all very good news and bodes well for AAUW efforts to continue to push our priorities at the state level while gridlock reigns in our nation's capital.

**Voters are quite comfortable contradicting themselves — especially Independent voters.** AAUW-supported **ballot initiatives** overwhelmingly went our way (go team!), yet the electorates in those same states chose senators who strongly oppose the very initiatives the body politic passed. This contradiction seems to be especially true for Independent voters, who will take on even more significance in the 2016 presidential election.

The Republican Party will be happy to take over the Senate come January 2015, but not before current Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and company try to shoehorn in as many of President Barack Obama's nominees as possible during what will likely be a lively lame-duck session. I'm not surprised about the Senate changing hands or the GOP increasing their U.S. House majority. Midterm elections in a sitting president's sixth year in office are rarely a picnic for his party, though this outcome is the worst for a president's party in, oh, about 50 years.

**Some barriers were broken, but it was mostly a rough night for women candidates.** Thanks to her special-election victory, which means she'll be sworn in this week, Rep.-elect Alma Adams of North Carolina will become the **100th woman member** of the current 113th Congress. This is the highest number of women in Congress in U.S. history. Despite breaking into three-digit range, it looks like the proportion of women in both the Senate and House will change very little. As for barriers broken, West Virginia and Iowa for the first time **elected** women to the U.S. Senate, with Iowa's Joni Ernst also becoming the first woman elected to Congress from Iowa overall. Gina Raimondo will be Rhode Island's first woman governor. Rep.-elect Elise Stefanik of New York, at age 30, is now the youngest woman ever elected to

Congress. New Jersey sent its first African American woman to the House, and Utah's Mia Love is the **first-ever** Republican African American woman elected to Congress. !

### **The “women’s vote” and the “gender gap” are different phenomena.**

The women’s vote describes the behavior of women voters as a whole — typically more women vote than men — and the divisions among women over a candidate or an issue. The gender gap is simply the voting gap between genders, that is, the difference in the percentages of women and men who support a specific candidate or issue. The gender gap alone may not be enough to push a candidate over the finish line if the women’s vote overall is not large enough, and it wasn’t this year. Democrats **won** women voters, but Republicans won men and by a wider margin. In short, elections are decided by those who actually show up.

### **Democrats are pointing the finger at the president, but the White House begs to differ.**

In race after race, vulnerable Democrats couldn’t escape the specter of an acutely unpopular White House. And before the votes were even tallied, the White House was already **distancing itself** from the party’s dreadful election results. The circular firing squad has commenced, and triangulation is in the wind.

### **ID laws suppress turnout and voting.**

A new law requiring photo identification for voters in Texas **prevented** some longtime voters from casting their ballots. Voters in North Carolina also **reported** trouble related to a new policy, and voters in Georgia reported being unsure

their votes had been processed. In Alabama, a 92-year-old woman who has voted since at least the 1960s was **told** her absentee ballot wouldn't count because her public housing ID wasn't acceptable. Laws that require voters to show identification **reduce** turnout among African Americans and young voters especially.

**The 2016 presidential primary season has officially begun!!**

**Urge Congress to act on Equal Pay Day—Check out the AAUW website under**

**Issues/Public Policy**

**Respectively submitted,**

**Lynda Hootman!Public Policy Chair**