

5-2023 AAUW State College Branch Bulletin

What is at stake in school board elections this year



EDUCATION VOTERS
of Pennsylvania

Note: AAUW State College Public Policy Co-Chair Mary Dupuis shared this illuminating piece from Sue Spicka, Executive Director of Education Voters PA.

On the May 16th primary election, voters in 499 school districts across Pennsylvania will determine which school board candidates will appear on the fall ballot. Candidates who advance to the fall election will, ultimately, be elected to positions where they will have enormous power to shape the priorities of our local public schools and influence the quality of education students in our communities receive.

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In recent years, Pennsylvania has become a focal point for extremist politicians, including at the school district level. In some places extremists will be running for school board to promote a political agenda and impose their personal and religious beliefs on students, teachers, and district staff. Their goals will include enacting regressive book bans, censorship of classroom discussions about race and gender identity, and policies discriminating against individual students because they identify as LGBTQ+.

Our communities depend on school boards to use tax dollars wisely and to ensure that our local schools will provide students with the opportunities that will allow them to thrive in school today and succeed in life after graduation. In districts that have elected a majority of extremists to their boards, we have seen tax dollars wasted on legal bills defending extremist policies instead of being invested in educating children.

Ultimately, we have seen that extremist boards have little concern for the quality of education students receive.

Learn more about the [Roles and Responsibilities](#) of school boards, how to talk about what is happening with extremists and school board elections this year with your friends and neighbors, and how you can be prepared to vote in the May 16th primary election.

Make a Plan to Vote on Tuesday, May 16

School board elections are nonpartisan, so candidates can "cross-file" and have their name appear on both the Republican and Democratic ballot. You will NOT know the party of a candidate when you vote. This makes it critical for you to learn about candidates' values BEFORE you go to the polls or vote by mail.

Our communities depend on school boards acting in good faith. We depend on them to use tax dollars wisely. We depend on them for schools that provide students with opportunities to thrive today and succeed after graduation. We depend on them to listen to us—their constituents—and not an extremist agenda.

So we can't let 2023 be an "off year" election. We need to show up and take a stand against extremism so that our communities—and our children—can come first.

--Susan Spicka, Executive Director, Education Voters of PA