

## PUBLIC POLICY by Ann Mulligan

New York became the first state to expand the Affordable Care Act to add pregnancy as a qualifying event as a lifestyle change, thereby allowing a pregnant person to change their health care insurance coverage. This is necessary as a person would have to secure health care coverage for the pregnancy during the six week open enrollment period at the end of the previous year to ensure coverage as the vast majority of pregnancies are unplanned, securing coverage in advance of actual need was exceptionally difficult. The legislation passed the Assembly and Senate in 2015 and was signed into law by Governor Cuomo at the End of December. New York leads the country and provides a precedent for all states to follow NY in this important family friendly policy. For 2016 we already know that Paid Family Leave will be an important legislative issue on the federal and New York State legislative sessions. The national AAUW will be taking a lead on the federal level. A New York state coalition for Paid Family Leave has already formed and taken action in districts across the state. AAUW-NYS is a campaign member of the Paid Family Leave NYS coalition. AAUW - Rockland will become a member as well. Citizen Action is the lead agency. Other groups in the coalition include business owners, faith leaders and labor unions. Unpaid family leave is often an impossible choice for new mothers in low income and financially strained situations. Additionally, new fathers would qualify for paid family leave. Paid family leave would be available to those with a birth, adoption or illness in the family. Working to secure Paid Family leave will be an important public policy effort for our AAUW branch in 2016. If you are interested in being active on this legislation on the state and/or federal level, **please contact Ann Mulligan at 845-893-2821 or [annm.aauw@gmail.com](mailto:annm.aauw@gmail.com).**