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 AAUW Iowa Co-President, 2022-24

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## President’s Letter

### You’ve Come a Long Way, Baby

The American Association of University Women has seen a lot of change since organizing in 1881 to advocate for women and girls. Since then, hundreds of branches have organized to fight for equal rights for women and girls. AAUW Iowa’s Public Policy Program supports freedom from violence, support of public schools, and the right for a woman to make her own health decisions including abortion... and more. We have won and lost on several fronts. The 2022 election illustrates many issues that show we still have much to do.

**“Freedom from violence and fear of violence...”** We need go no further than the reckless gun amendment on the ballot that would make it extremely difficult to pass reasonable gun laws in Iowa. AAUW Iowa has joined with over thirty other organizations to support Iowans for Responsible Gun Laws’ fight to defeat this dangerous amendment. Their orange signs dot the lawns of many AAUW members, encouraging Iowans to "Vote No on Public Measure 1."

**“Adequate and equitable funding of public education, early childhood through postsecondary...”** As legislators

brag about a raise in funding for public schools this year, it must be pointed out that for several years, including this one, funding has not even matched inflation costs. Couple that with the push to give public monies for vouchers to private schools and “adequate” is not even close.

**“Self-determination of one’s reproductive health decisions...”** With the Supreme Court’s decision to overturn Roe v Wade, the right to a safe abortion has been stripped away for millions of women. The impact of this will disproportionately affect minority and poor women. Unfortunately it will also affect the health of many women. This is a fight we thought we had won 50 years ago. It is not over.

What can we do? Be informed and share our knowledge. Whatever issue it is, raise your voice. As an AAUW member become a two-minute activist. Campaign for candidates who share AAUW views. Write letters to the editor. Spread the word among neighbors and friends. Don’t do nothing. And above all else, vote. We need to get the rest of the way.

## Cedar Falls-Waterloo Branch Annual Kickoff

Karen Agee, Cedar Falls-Waterloo Branch

Members of the Cedar Falls-Waterloo Branch of AAUW met on August 29 at the Waterloo Public Library for their annual kickoff. Almost 40 members, scholarship recipients, and guests from the community attended.

The 2022 scholarship recipients are Piper Wiedenhoff, Madison Stoneking, and Audrey Dillvou. Thanks to Branch fundraising success last year, each woman received student membership and a \$2000 award. Piper is a senior at UNI in the fall of 2022 pursuing a degree in physical education teaching. Madison is a sophomore on the pre-PA/pre-med track with a major in biology. Audrey is a junior at UNI majoring in athletic training and rehabilitation studies.

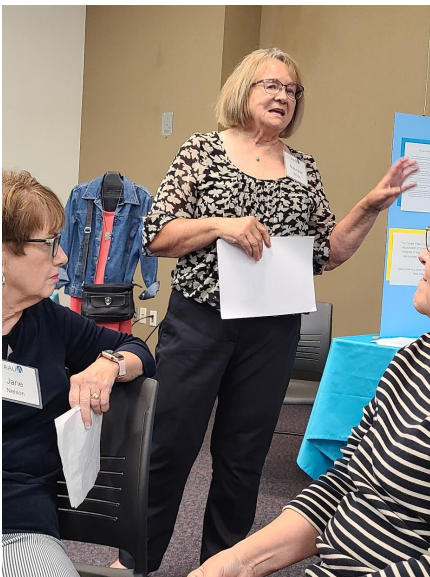
Attendees enjoyed door prizes (floral arrangements and garden vegetables) and refreshments contributed by Ardelle Brown, Pat Higby, and Allaire George. Participants learned about the community action projects, fundraising plans, and study/interest groups of the Branch. Public Policy Director Maureen White urged all to be involved as Two-Minute Activists and keep apprised of important public policy issues facing us all.

*Upper right: The book interest group attracted people with a table display.*

*Lower left: Maureen White explained public policy initiatives and two-minute activist.*

*Lower middle: Scholarship recipients Audrey Dillvou, Madison Stoneking, and Piper Wiedenhoff*

*Lower right: Arts and crafts will be part of an auction for an AAUW fundraiser.*



### Curious about the Cedar Falls-Waterloo Online Auction?

Although we can't begin bidding until noon on Saturday Oct. 22, we can watch the [BiddingOwl website](#) as it is filled with wonderful arts and crafts items for your holiday shopping pleasure. Bidding ends at 4 pm on Sunday, Nov. 13. All proceeds support our scholarship program.

### Save the Date

#### Mary Helen Stefaniak in Des Moines

November 15 at 6:30 p.m. The Des Moines branch will sponsor a "meet the author" event at Beaverdale Books, 2629 Beaver Ave # S1, Des Moines, IA. Mary Helen Stefaniak will read selections, sign books, and talk about *The World of Pondsides* and *The Six-Minute Memoir: Fifty-Five Short Essays on Life*.

## Cedar Rapids Area Branch Members Stay Active

The Cedar Rapids Branch of AAUW supports local businesses, especially those owned by women. Feedwell Kitchen and Bakery is one of those businesses. An informal coffee, breakfast, and meeting was held Saturday, July 30th, in their Board room with 10 members attending: Helane Golden, Penny Foy, Deb Reed, Karen Alderson, Cheri Dickey, Trudy Sundermann, Barb Goings, Lillie Moore, Millie Peshek, and Linda Armitage (President). Great conversation and discussion of concerns faced by all attending really made the meeting fly by. Good coffees and food at the Feedwell!

A small coffee and conversation occurred a week later when Kalindi Garvin, Deanna Howard (our local Branch Secretary) and Susan Staed, a supporter of our local Branch, along with Susan's mother, Lucille, met at our local Panera. Kalindi is one of our newer members and on the staff of Mt. Mercy University in Cedar Rapids.

On August 16, the Cedar Rapids AAUW branch met at the Hiawatha Library to plan 2022-23 programs. Sue Jorgenson led our group with the theme of "Women Wear Many Hats." We enjoyed dinner together and finalized the theme for programs this year.



*Right: Informal gathering at Panera*

*Lower left: Linda Armitage with Holly Ervin, co-owner of Feedwell.*

*Lower right: Attending the event at the library: Karen Alderson, Deborah Reed, Penny Foy, Cheri Dickey, Trudy Sundermann, Helane Golden, Sue Jorgenson, Jeaneal Weeks, Linda Armitage, Joan Jacob, Gwen Randall, Barbara Goings, Millie Peshek, Gisela Steffe. Not pictured: Erica Yoder.*



## Spring Conference Speaker Mini-Preview

**Laurie Schipper**

2022 Iowa Women's Hall of Fame Honoree

Laurie Schipper will be one of our speakers at the spring conference. Laurie served as the Executive Director for the Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence for 28 years. She currently works for Galvanize USA, a nonpartisan organization that supports women to use their civic power to create an America that works for all of us, and Galvanize Action, whose mission is to identify, reach, and move moderate women in rural, small town, and suburban America to reliably vote for progress.



## Diversity Officer Training

Anne Kiche and Jane Goldsmith, AAUW of Iowa DEI Co-Directors

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion are current topics on which the future of AAUW depends. AAUW has implemented DEI training for diversity leaders from branches in all states. On the 10<sup>th</sup> of September 2022, Kathy Farris, Anne Kiche, Elaine Kresse, Ann Henninger and Jane Goldsmith participated in an online diversity officer training. The training focused on four topics:

- Primary Role of Diversity Officers
- Importance of and Need for Diversity Officers
- Importance of Branch and State Engagement in DEI Efforts
- Basics of AAUW's Online DEI Toolkit

AAUW Diversity Chair, Melissa LaDuke, presented **Primary Role of Diversity Officers**. She began by asking everyone what the role of a diversity officer is. There was an intense chat on the topic as various members from different states stated their thoughts. Answers included: a liaison, a person who speaks for those who can't speak for themselves, a person serving as a key contact for all, among others. While different people have different thoughts on the role of a diversity officer, Melissa LaDuke stated that the primary role of a diversity officer is to apply in depth knowledge of principles and practices to deliver solutions in areas such as inclusion, member engagement, training, and communication. Other roles include serving as a key contact; seeking external diversity partnership with other branches, states and national entities; and taking on diversity projects as assigned. AAUW has developed a tool kit with definitions and descriptions of the primary role of each officer involved in DEI. The tool kit can be utilized to help officers understand their roles.

Suzanne Young-Mercer discussed **Importance of and Need for Diversity Officers**. She stated that it is crucial to have diversity officers because they ensure that everyone "gets to sit at the table." How do they do that? By checking current initiatives, bringing people who share their values together, emulating what AAUW is doing, challenging each branch to be part of the initiatives, and inviting members to ask how they can work together to bring unity. She acknowledged that there is a lot of work to be done like branch leaders investing in members to do the work, having a branch workshop to bridge the gap between generations, creating webinars to learn use of technology and social media apps, and demonstrating that exclusion is not consistent with DEI principles.

Ivana Marshall discussed the **Importance of Branch and State Engagement in DEI Efforts**. She expressed the need

for board members to set the tone by having conversations about diversity, discussing issues that might pose difficulties, and acknowledging cultural shift. She asked, "How do you support DEI role models?" This can be done by considering the implications of language use to diverse members when discussing DEI, reviewing research, using the tool kit, implementing values by recognizing and demonstrating DEI culture, ensuring that leaders are clear about DEI culture, and reaching consensus with other communities.

She further suggested that board members and DEI leaders should improve their roles by implementing Specific Measurable Achievable Relevant Time-bound (SMART) goals. Giving examples of branches that have been successful in implementing the DEI initiative, she mentioned the Missouri Inclusion Infusion Initiative where branch and board members are expected to take the first 10 minutes of a meeting to discuss diversity and inclusion topics before conducting business.

Cynthia Shanahan and Melissa LaDuke presented **Basics of AAUW Online DEI Tool Kit**. The AAUW Diversity, Equity and Inclusion resources aim to identify best practices for promoting DEI within AAUW. These resources present guidelines for how AAUW members can demonstrate an understanding of AAUW's mission, values, goals, and strategic plan. It is meant to start the inclusion conversation. Members are encouraged to seek ways to incorporate inclusive practices into their branches and daily life.

The tool kit is important for understanding a multi-layered topic like diversity. [Find the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Toolkit here](#). All DEI resources, webinars, and definitions are found at the website.

The training session provided time for questions and observations. We learned that it is important to hear what branches are doing in other states. A participant asked how exclusive AAUW membership serves promotion of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Her question was a plus for Iowa in support of inclusive membership.

Also, Iowa branches under Carletta's leadership made diversity a focus. We read and learned more about black history and factors that contribute to racism.

The new [AAUW diversity resources](#) certainly make it easier for members and branches to access DEI information and resources as we continue our DEI journey into the future.

## AAUW Is an Opportunity

Elaine Kresse, C/U Chair for Iowa AAUW.

Earlier I wrote about the importance and technique for reaching out to the colleges in your vicinity. Earlier this spring, Kim and I workshopped how to write an elevator speech. We talked about the importance of tailoring those to the potential members. This month, I had a different request. I was asked for samples that our members could practice and adapt.

I assume you're all pretty clear on why you pay your dues. Your elevator speech might be like mine: AAUW's research is sound and has been groundbreaking such as the Hostile Hallways Bullying: Teasing and Sexual Harassment in Schools in 2000. Our lobbying history in DC and Des Moines is also important as are our literary groups and friends.

**Appealing to a very busy professional:** Why would they want to add another thing to their schedule? "In AAUW you meet a variety of members. Sometimes, if you are a teacher, you feel like all you know are your colleagues. I'm sure that happens in your profession too." Remember they can join now with an associate degree so the professions may vary widely. "AAUW offers so many opportunities to make friends outside your field—outside your professional organizations."

**Appealing to those with the added challenge of children:** "I know you don't have much time to yourself, but meeting others in AAUW can be very helpful with that. You meet others with the same challenges, and varied interests, and they too are trying fit everything in. It's time for yourself and a support group."

**Appealing to those who say, "It's election year and I'm already doing all I can to help elect"—fill in the blank.**

"The election will soon be over. That's when AAUW will be your biggest ally. We are nonpartisan and very dedicated to lobbying and holding forums—educating the public."

"We are prochoice which means that we stand for women making medical decisions with medical advice not legislators. We have members who don't personally believe in abortion." "We try very hard to have both political parties represented in our branches. You can't imagine how helpful that has been when we plan forums. They know we will be fair. We are not partisan, but we do have positions on issues."

In the end, joining AAUW is about getting to know other educated people who share your problems and concerns. They offer a chance for you to build friendships outside your bubble - something that we need so badly at any age or stage of our life.



**Lastly: the speech is nothing if you don't have an ask:**

"Our next meeting is September 13th. We will be participating in a zoom hosted by the Des Moines branch of AAUW. In Iowa the state board has partnered with Iowans for Responsible Gun Laws. We will have a short business meeting at 6:30. The zoom presentation at 7 will include a Q& A. We will follow that with a discussion with those who care to stay and discuss actions. This might be planning a question or two for the forum coming up. Could I give you a ride?"

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### AAUW Iowa Spring Conference Save the Date

April 21-22, 2023

Hilton Garden Inn, Des Moines/Urbandale  
8600 Northpark Drive, Johnston, IA 50131



### Lobby Day—Save the Date

Mark your calendars. Our Lobby Day 2023 will be Wednesday, February 8, from 9:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m.



## How to Host an AAUW Candidate Forum

Diane Kearns, AAUW Iowa Public Policy Co-Director

Introductions – Candidates and Moderator

Opening statements by the candidates. This can be time limited) Questions:

1. Are you in favor of a voucher system that diverts public funds to private schools?
2. Do you support vigorous enforcement of Title IX and other civil rights laws that pertain to education and prohibit discrimination?
3. How would you support pay equity and fairness in employment?
4. Do you support increasing the minimum wage to allow workers to earn a living wage?
5. Do you support workplace benefits such as paid family leave, medical and sick leave and provisions for pregnant workers?
6. Do you support privatized Medicaid?
7. What is your position on the right of privacy of the individual to make reproductive choices?
8. What is your position on the proposed amendment to the Iowa Constitution known as Measure-1, the amendment dealing with strict scrutiny of gun rights?
9. What is your position regarding measures that facilitate, protect access to, and expand the right of all citizens to vote?
10. What is your position with regard to rigorous enforcement of laws against human trafficking and support for programs to aid trafficking victims?
11. What is your position regarding collective bargaining rights for public or private sector employees and the right of workers to unionize without employer intimidation or reprisal?
12. What is your position on protecting and strengthening retirement benefits and programs including IPERS programs?
13. What are the most important challenges facing our state and how do you propose to address them?

Summary by the candidates and thank them for attending.

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## Karen Kedrowski Addresses Ames and Clarion Branches

Diane Patton

The Ames Branch hosted the Clarion Branch on September 13 to hear Dr. Karen Kedrowski, Director of the Iowa State University Carrie Chapman Catt Center. Her presentation, "Iowa Election Law Changes," included information on voter eligibility, registration and voting deadlines, valid forms of voter ID/place of residence documentation, petitioning for satellite voting locations,

and regulations restricting absentee balloting.

Three former AAUW Iowa Presidents (Branches where they were members during their terms) attended: Margaretjean Weltha 1974-76 of the Ames branch, Florine Swanson 1984-86 of the Clarion branch, and Diane Patton 2008-2010 of the Calhoun County branch.



*Karen Kedrowski*



*Florine Swanson, Margaretjean Weltha, and Diane Patton*

# Moving Forward with the ERA

Ann Gale, AAUW Iowa Initiative Editor, and AJ Conroy  
Attorney at the US Department of Housing and Urban Development

On September 12, several members of AAUW attended a zoom meeting with Doris Kelley and Amy Jo (AJ) Conroy, an attorney in Illinois who is interested in moving forward in pursuing the 28<sup>th</sup> Amendment (the Equal Rights Amendment).

Doris Kelley was the chair of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment Centennial Commemoration Committee in Iowa, and she spoke to AAUW members at the spring conference last April about moving forward with the ERA. She had invited AAUW members to continue the conversation with AJ Conroy. AJ Conroy is an Attorney at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in Chicago.

AJ stressed the need to bring the 28th Amendment to the finish line. It will be a tool to use to fight against laws that are discriminatory. She pointed out that messiness is normal for getting an amendment approved. Above all treat the 28th Amendment as real. She also said that the steps we might take in Iowa would not necessarily be the same as steps taken in other states. During our zoom meeting and follow-up emails, AJ made the following recommendations.

## 1. Candidate Pledges

Ask candidates for their position on the 28th Amendment. The ERA Coalition has an "ERA Certified" program for candidates to affirm their support for equality. <https://www.eracoalition.org/electequality>. Ask candidates to pose with an ERA button or sign and post it on social media (very helpful later). Go to candidate forums, and ask candidates for office about their position on this issue. This elevates the issue both for the candidate and for the audience.

## 2. Art Display

Rent an art display from [artists4ERA.org](http://artists4ERA.org). This group is working to move the conversation into greater cultural awareness with art. Some of the artists are very well known. Colleges and law firms may be a good co-partner. Here is a recent example from [Maryland](#).

## 3. Awareness Events for AAUW Branches and the League of Women Voters

Here are some ideas for local events. Hold a discussion group after screening "[Amend](#), episode 4" on Netflix. Or, we could arrange for a screening of "[Still Working 9 to 5](#)" which focuses on the ERA. As a book group selection, there is "[We the Women](#)" or for teen readers, "[Ordinary Equality](#)" is wonderful. For podcast fans, the first season of [Ordinary Equality](#) (scroll down to the first season) takes a deep dive.

## 4. Signal Boost

Follow the ERA Coalition on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) and share posts and tweets. The Ratify Era Facebook group based in Illinois is also active: <https://www.facebook.com/RatifyERAIllinois/>

AJ expressed interest in continuing to work with us in Iowa. Members of AAUW Iowa and the League of Women Voters will meet in October to plan a path to get Amendment 28 added to the Constitution. Meanwhile more information is available at the [Hard Won Not Done](#) website. A video about the ERA is also available at that site, and the AAUW Iowa website has a link to that site. The time is now.



## Are You a Two-Minute Activist?

The Two-Minute Activist program is an opportunity for AAUW members to make their voice heard by sending a message to their U.S. Senator or Representative asking for support or opposition to an issue at the federal level. Participants receive an email message about the action needed, as well as a link to send a message. You may send the message as composed by AAUW staff or add your own comments. It's very easy to sign-up and it really does only

take a few minutes to send a message to our elected representatives.

To sign-up to be a Two-Minute Activist, go to <https://www.aauw.org/act/two-minute-activist/>

Would you rather contact your representatives by phone?

US Senate: (202) 224-3121

US House: 1-202-224-3121