



Katherine Farris
 AAUW Iowa Co-President, 2022-24

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President’s Letter

Giving myself a week in order to meet Ann Gale’s June 30th deadline for the Iowa Initiative, I began writing my article June 23rd. My start extolled my fellow board members. (They are terrific!) I followed up with board ideas for programs to help with branch programming (also terrific). Then June 24th arrived...

On June 24, 2022, in a 5-4 decision, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the previous ruling in the 1973 Roe v. Wade case. In that case, the Court had ruled that “the Constitution of the United States generally protects a pregnant woman’s liberty to choose to have an abortion.” The new decision made history because it is the first time a right has been removed by the Supreme Court, the right for a woman to make her own health decisions.

Since 1977, AAUW has recognized access to a safe abortion as a fundamental right. In fact, AAUW advocates for all women to have access to the full range of health care services. The groundwork has been laid for us. All we have to do is get out there and support it.

Here, but certainly not limited to this list, are things you can do.

1. Sign up for the Two-Minute Activist: <https://www.aauw.org/act/two-minute-activist/>

2. Become informed. Useful resources on the AAUW website include [AAUW Reproductive Rights Quick Facts](#), [AAUW Take Action: Rally for Reproductive Rights](#), [AAUW Public Policy Priorities](#).
3. Write a letter to your newspaper supporting a woman’s right to manage her own health. Short and sweet is good.
4. Contact your representatives, and tell them that reproductive rights are important to you.
5. As an individual, donate time, donate money, vote for pro-choice candidates.
6. Ask questions about reproductive rights at candidate meetings.
7. Organize and participate in candidate meetings, community forums, and demonstrations. Register voters.
8. Last, but not least, do not advocate for a candidate in the name of AAUW. Only speak to the issues. As an issue-based organization, AAUW does not support candidates.

Katherine Farris
 AAUW Iowa, Co-President

Save the Date!

AAUW Iowa Board of Directors has approved the date and location of our next state conference!

The conference will be held on April 21-22, 2023. We are pleased to announce that we will be returning to the Hilton Garden Inn/Urbandale located at 8600 Northpark Drive, Johnston, Iowa 50131.

Watch each coming issue of the *Iowa Initiative* for additional information about the conference.

Pat Newman and Rebecca Sweeney
AAUW Iowa Co-Program Vice Presidents
Conference Co-Chairs



When an AAUW Member Reaches Out to a College or University

Elaine Kresse, AAUW Iowa College/University Director

One of our strengths in AAUW is our connection with colleges and universities. Unless we hone our skills in making the connection meaningful, it may be lost. As a member of a branch, a member at large, or a student, we need to know how to make the contact. “Make the ask,” as it were.

In our breakout session at the AAUW state conference back in April, Kim Folkers and I suggested practicing an AAUW elevator speech, to include three simple things that make AAUW important to us. When you reach out to a college or university, you need to update that speech to three simple things that make AAUW important to the person (i.e., the school) you are contacting. (Elevator speech worksheets are available on request.)

For most schools, my first outreach is to the office of the President. The secretary there has always been my best source. She will know if the school is a partner school. If she doesn’t, that is your first opportunity for a practiced elevator speech of the purpose and benefits for them in AAUW. If the school is a partner, she will know who you should speak with. If not, she will know who to direct you to for a conversation about joining AAUW.

Often the representative in a partner school has been assigned the role by a higher up that knows the value. The representative may not. It’s just another item on their “to do” list. This is your second opportunity to use your elevator speech. This is slightly

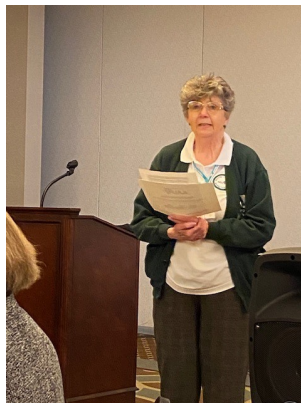
different as they are already members. Here you need to quickly list a key item or two like Start Smart or the National Conference of College Women Student Leaders (NCCWSL).

You may be thinking of ways the school could help you or your branch—maybe they have space and facilities available. Don’t ask that. Remember you are talking to them about how AAUW at the national, state, or branch level can be of help to them. Even you as an individual can be a resource for them. At this point, ask “Could we set up an appointment to talk more about your school joining AAUW?” or “I’m so happy, you are a partner school and we’ve met. How can I (or our branch) help you?” “When can we meet again to discuss ways we can work together?”

Remember that we give a Distinguished Faculty Award each year at our state conference. Please use that in your kit of elevator speeches. Explain the award and ask,

“Could I leave the application (or email it to you)?” Be sure they understand that, while we would love to have them partner with us, that is not a requirement for them to submit an application for a candidate they wish to honor.

This leaves the door open for a second contact as it gets close to the date for submitting the paper work for the award. It’s all about making that contact. Feel free to contact me for additional help in how to do this outreach.



Members React to the Supreme Court Decision Reversing Roe v. Wade

In a recent 5-4 decision, the United States Supreme Court reversed Roe versus Wade, the landmark 1973 case that established a constitutional right to an abortion. We asked our members to tell us about their experiences about a women's right to make health care decisions.

I was on the Iowa Planned Parenthood staff 1990-94 as Director of Outreach (legislation, education, fundraising, public relations) when there were medical personnel being murdered in places around the country and threats in Iowa. The Operation Rescue office across the street from the main clinic/administration building had weekly sidewalk protest marches, and several invasions requiring police and firemen to clear them out, until we made safety changes, including an Ex-FBI man as safety officer and the installation of bullet-proof windows. US Marshall teams patrolled our building 24 hours a day for 18 months. Other safety measures were taken at the other 15 clinics around the state. I had picketing in front of my house too, as did other staff.

So now it starts again, not only for a woman's right to choose, but for all the other rights hinging on the 14th Amendment.

Kathleen Laurila, Des Moines and eNetwork

When I was in college in the late 60's, abortion was illegal. A student in one of the dorms died from a self-induced abortion. Women will die from this change to the Constitution. I marched in the late 70's for the Equal Rights Amendment in Chicago on Mother's Day with my 5-year-old daughter and 1-year-old son with AAUW and many others. I also marched in January 2017 in St. Louis for women's rights. We can't go back. Women must be able to control their bodies.

Dev Kiedaisch, Keokuk

I was the first task force leader to bring Planned Parenthood to the Quad Cities. It was a five year fight, but we did it. Last year when asked about successes and failures, I said, "You can't always tell the difference. For twenty years that was huge success. They found my uninsured friend's breast cancer and helped her get the treatment she needed." So much good. When they closed I thought, 'Does that make it a failure?' Now I'm faced with a worse dilemma. In so many ways, those of us who benefited from progress for women in the last 50 years will now be turning the same fight over to our granddaughters!

It is no wonder the ERA has not passed. I just realized this morning that as a woman I am nothing more than a shipping container to legislators. No one has asked what becomes of the cargo in 9 months—just as long as the container doesn't lose the precious cargo.

DNA testing being what it is now, there should be a match done on all births and the father should be given full responsibility for care for at least nine months. It's so like prostitution. The woman gets arrested; the man who hired her goes home to his comfortable house. It's like immigration. The migrant gets deported; the employer who hired him gets a slap on the hand—if that.

I trust fighting for child care and medical help, increased social services and foster care will all be well funded by both sides of the aisle now. I'm also sure single mothers who accept that help won't continue to be looked down upon. Fat chance!

Elaine Kresse, Davenport-Bettendorf

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Left: Marching in DC April 28, 2004, four Des Moines friends - we joined thousands that day. Kathleen Laurila on left.

Right: Cedar Falls-Waterloo AAUW members at a Pro-Choice rally in Waterloo on May 7th. Kat Beane Hanson, Mary Dove, Linda Morgan, Beth Dove, Karen Agee, Bill Close, Jane Close, Maureen White, Betsy Brant



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My interest in women's issues (especially abortion rights) and my choosing to be a feminist probably started way back as a teenager. My teachers at St. Joseph Academy High School in Des Moines stimulated us all to be thinkers, and even to be freethinkers. I was fortunate that all of them (highly educated nuns/sisters) believed that a woman's happiness often was defined by her choices and opportunities and educational opportunities. At the age of 19 I had a "scare" and had a late period. We all know that feeling. That was 5 years before Roe vs Wade passed as constitutional. I got involved in campus politics and the National Women's political Caucus Organization that was getting women to be leaders and running for public office. I joined the national organization called Catholics for Choice. I stayed a member for 50 years and still am.

I have been a strong Democrat and active as a volunteer to elect Democrats at the local and state and national level, because of the Democrats' policy and platform for supporting women's issues and especially abortion rights. My husband and I have been strong supporters of Planned Parenthood. We have a blended family of four kids and four grandkids and five great grandkids. We believe in a strong public education system here in Iowa, and do not support our tax dollars going for private education of any kind. I am proud to be a member of AAUW, and support its belief in women and girls achieving equity in jobs and pay, and its stand on women's reproductive rights.

I am heartbroken and devastated by the recent Supreme Court decision to overturn the constitutional right for every woman in the U.S. to have complete abortion care as part of our safe healthcare. This should not be defined by state.

Linda Armitage, Cedar Rapids

I have had an abortion. And I definitely think no one else should be in charge of our bodies. Personally I believe we are going down the wrong path talking about abortion. It's lack of equality we need to be discussing. We do not have equal rights. No other group's bodies are held by the government. We are now government property. And let's hold men accountable. What price do they pay for impregnating someone? None. That's the point. We do not have equality.

Karen Dannewitz, Algona

My niece has always wanted a baby more than anything. She's had multiple miscarriages (every one of them counting as an abortion according to pro-life figures). Working with a prominent medical center she finally carried a fetus well into the second trimester. Long enough to have hope and begin to have expectations. Then she went in for a routine (though much more frequent than usual) check up and the fetus was no longer viable. She was devastated. Heartbroken. The insurance company refused to cover the delivery because abortions were not covered. Carrying the nonviable fetus could result in infection, or even infertility or death, but since it was an "abortion" none of that mattered. On top of everything else that grieving family had to come up with the money to pay for a late term abortion.

Anne Stansbury Johnson, Palo Alto County

Several AAUW Ames Branch members and friends participated in a Women's Rights Rally in campustown in Ames on June 29. Two photos are below.



Left: Ames members Diane Patton and Mary Ann Lundy

Below: Ames members Jean McMaken and Mary Ann Lundy; Paul Lundy; Members Peggy Faden and Pat Newman



Reflecting on the Past....Focusing on the Future

Our Reproductive Rights Journey

Mary Ann Ahrens, AAUW Iowa Past President

For decades AAUW Iowa has monitored and advocated for a woman's right to determine her own reproductive decisions, which today continues to be a very controversial issue politically and religiously. In 1990-91 AAUW Iowa received a \$4,000 AAUW Iowa Educational Foundation community action grant "Voices for Choices" to fulfill one of their action priorities. The 1989 U.S. Supreme Court decision on *Webster vs. Reproductive Health Services* weakened *Roe v. Wade*. It was at that time AAUW Iowa decided to develop an outreach project in the state acting on the conviction that the best choices are informed ones. More women needed to understand the issue and the impact of the *Webster* decision on their lives.

The purposes of the project included: (1) development of a reproductive rights' educational curriculum, (2) recruitment and training a cadre of trainers, (3) conducting three-hour workshops for women and girls in Iowa's rural communities (which no one else was doing), and (4) the marketing and scheduling of workshops within other organizations and at colleges. The ability to make informed personal choices, according to the project goals, "has a great impact on the physical, psychological, and financial lives and destinies of women and girls, not only in our culture but globally as well," stated Mary Ann Ahrens, Project Director.

A cadre of 16 trainers representing a cross-section of the state population, along with two from Nebraska, included AAUW and non-members, medical professionals, educators, and clergy.

The workshop presented solid information, not media hype. It combined short presentations and group exercises. It included current medical and legal thinking, the foundations of American democracy, the right to privacy, how values influence choices, and three videos, one of which focused on five women in various circumstances facing their own reproductive rights choices. A discussion followed on participant choices using those examples.

To get started, a first round of workshops was sponsored by AAUW branches, a YWCA, Iowa State University Women's Center, and the Iowa League of Women Voters. Statewide publicity for the project was completed, working with the Iowa Network for Women (approximately 30 groups),

Planned Parenthood, Iowa Commission on the Status of Women, AAUW Iowa Colleges and Universities, and the Iowa Democratic and Republican parties.

AAUW Iowa's visibility increased not only because of the publicity but because every workshop included not only the



From left: Mary Ann Ahrens, Sheila Sidles, Rev. Penny Binger, and Vicki Ericson create the Choice Format at the training retreat.

curriculum materials but information about the Project, AAUW, membership and the AAUW grants program. Recently, AAUW CEO Gloria Blackwell indicated that the shocking decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade* is merely a "setback" in our work toward equity. We are in this for the long haul. We can all use a reminder of the power we have to effect change. AAUW Iowa has a long and proud history of advocating for the issue. Gloria says, "Remember, our work is a marathon, not a sprint, and we fully intend to go the distance."

AAUW Statement Strongly Condemning the U.S. Supreme Court's Opinion

Gloria Blackwell, AAUW CEO

The American Association of University Women (AAUW) strongly condemns the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*. The decision overturns the landmark *Roe v. Wade* ruling that established abortion as a constitutionally protected right nearly 50 years ago and ignores the will of the American people, 80% of whom support legal abortion.

AAUW believes everyone has the right to make decisions about their own reproductive lives without government interference. Abortion access is vital to women's ability to control their lives, bodies and futures. Without reproductive freedom, there can be no equity.

Being able to choose whether and when to become a parent improves women's well-being and fosters economic security—a crucial component of AAUW's mission. This is particularly important in a country that lacks accessible maternal health care, paid caregiving leave and workplace protections for pregnant workers.

The Court's decision hurts all of us, but it will do the most harm to low-income people, women of color, immigrants, people with disabilities and LGBTQ+ people, because these groups already face substantial barriers to accessing reproductive services and health care.

While the Court's decision is a major setback for all Americans, AAUW remains steadfast in our commitment to protecting reproductive rights, a vital component of gender equity.

Responsible Gun Laws

Dev Kiedaisch and Diane Kearns, AAUW Iowa Public Policy Co-Directors

AAUW Iowa is a member of the coalition of Iowans for Responsible Gun Laws. On November 8, 2022, there will be an Iowa Constitutional Amendment on the ballot. The amendment states: "The right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed. The sovereign state of Iowa affirms and recognizes this right to be a fundamental individual right. Any and all restrictions to this right shall be subject to strict scrutiny." This is not the Second Amendment. It goes beyond that. Strict scrutiny is the highest level of scrutiny a court uses to decide whether a law is unconstitutional. Inserting the words "strict scrutiny" tips the balance of power, elevating access to guns above public health and safety. Only three other states have similar wording, Louisiana, Alabama, and Missouri. Those states rank 3rd, 4th and 5th in the United States for gun deaths. As of 2020 guns are now the number one cause of death for children. Black Americans are 10 times more likely to experience a gun homicide than white Americans. Women are 21 times more likely to be murdered with a gun in the United States than in any other high-income country.

The Iowans for Responsible Gun Laws (<https://www.iowansforresponsiblegunlaws.com/action>) site has both a PowerPoint and a video which branches can use to present this information to members and their community. The video takes just over six minutes. It is information many Iowans don't have.

The other group that AAUW Iowa has joined is a non-partisan group that is focusing on issues, Coalition of Iowans for a More Just Iowa. They will be providing stands on fair education and civil rights, sensible gun laws, registering voters, and other issues. If you have an issue you would like included, please contact Dev at (devkiedaisch@mac.com) or Diane at (diane_kearns@hotmail.com).

We will be working with AAUW, branches and members across the state to address the changes that the overturning of Roe v. Wade will bring about. Be sure you, your friends, and your family are registered to vote and vote in November!

Reckless Gun Zoom Meeting

On September 13 at 7:00, please join members of the Des Moines branch of AAUW for an important meeting about the upcoming reckless gun rights amendment that will be on the ballot in November. We hope to have a leader from the Iowans for Responsible Gun Laws Coalition for this presentation. Watch for more information and the zoom link in the next newsletter. It is important that members, friends, and families be informed about this extreme legislation. This meeting will give you the information you need to talk with your neighbors about it.

Please Help Me Reach AAUW Members

Ann Gale, AAUW Iowa Newsletter Editor

The AAUW Member Services Database is gone, and has been replaced by the AAUW Community Hub. One important change is that I no longer have access to rosters of members of AAUW branches other than my own. The only way I will be able to send the AAUW Iowa newsletter is for you to tell me who your members are. I am asking that each branch have one person (probably the president, membership vice president, or treasurer) send me your branch roster. I can be reached at ann.gale9@gmail.com or 515-320-4404. Please include an up-to-date email address for each member who would like to receive the newsletter. If we work together on this, your members can continue to be informed about activities of other branches.

ERA Video Nears Finish Line

At the Spring Conference, Doris Kelley presented the history of efforts to pass the Equal Rights Amendment, and urged AAUW members to work with other organizations to push this issue. She said that a video is being produced by a professional relations company, and we will have access to that video to help with our efforts. That video is expected to be finished by mid-July. Please begin your efforts to reach out to other organizations near you to work on this issue.

