



IOWA INITIATIVE

A PUBLICATION OF AAUW-IOWA
VOLUME 104 NUMBER 3
September 2023

Gender Equity on the Hit List Again

Kathie Farris, Co-President

Currently, the Iowa record of gender equity on boards and commissions is good on both the state and local levels. Consequently, when I read that one of the state senators, Sen. Jason Schultz from Schleswig, wanted to get rid of the requirement to have an equal number of women and men on these organizations, I ignored it. After all, certainly the rest of our legislature would not support him. Wrong! On August 29, 2023, the Boards and Commissions Review Committee recommendation was to “Allow the most qualified Iowans to serve on boards and commissions by repealing the arbitrary gender-balance requirement.” Sadly, this is being pushed in a state where past support for gender balance has come from both Democratic and Republican legislators and governors. Historically, the push to pass the ERA was coupled with the attempt to get gender equity on boards and commissions. After the Equal Rights Amendment failed to be ratified, a coalition of AAUW, National Organization for Women, League of Women Voters, Iowa’s Commission on the Status of Women, and the Catt Center at Iowa State University pushed to get gender balance into law. (Interestingly, the Commission on the Status of Women is going to be merged with another agency/commission under the new rules.) AAUW Iowa President Florine Swanson traveled the state working to get the gender balance bill passed. Kappie Spencer, an Iowan who was on the national AAUW board and a member of the Des Moines branch, helped spearhead the Gender Balance Project in Iowa. Enter Iowa State representative Johnie Hammond in 1983. From Ames Johnie had campaigned on getting more women appointed to county boards. She attached amendments requiring gender balance to a myriad of bills. Finally, in 1987, a bill passed requiring an equal number of men and women on state boards. Iowa was the first state to do that. Skip forward to 2009 when the law was expanded to include local boards and commissions. Again Iowa was first in the nation.



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I represented AAUW Iowa at the two-hour hearing at the Capitol. Each speaker was only allowed two minutes to speak. I noted that while Iowa has the best record in the nation for gender equity on boards, it is still only true for two-thirds of them. I pointed out that now is not the time to bail out. Instead, it is the time to work to encourage women to be equal partners in supporting our state, our towns, and our counties. Co-presidents of the AAUW Cedar Falls-Waterloo Branch Maureen White and Louise Conklin sent a letter to the commission stating, “the gender balance law works, it does not prevent anyone from serving, and the law provides for good government through representation that is reflective of the population.”

What can you do? As an individual and a branch, you can let the commission and your state legislators know that you are opposed to the removal of gender equity for Iowa’s boards and commissions. The address is BCRCcomments@iowa.gov. The deadline has been extended to September 17th. Imagine what an impact there would be if 200 to 300 AAUW Iowa members wrote a note. Let’s do it. And be prepared to contact your legislators if this issue makes it into a proposed law.

Midwest Regional Conference

BOOK HOTEL ROOM at Drury by September 16th
1-800-325-0720 / druryhotels.com / AAUW Code:
10046618 REGISTER prior to September 16th for Early
Bird rate of \$200.

Gender Balance on Boards and Commissions Is Being Threatened

In 1987, the state of Iowa passed legislation requiring the membership of state-level appointed boards and commissions to be gender balanced. In 2009, Iowa extended this gender balance requirement to county and municipal boards and commissions; the requirement went into effect January 1, 2012. This legislation required that a “good faith effort” be made to balance the boards as seats became available. Therefore, achieving gender balance has been a slow process.

After the massive state government reorganization bill passed this past legislative session, the governor appointed the Boards and Commissions Review Committee (BCRC) to examine issues of streamlining government. A recommendation to strike the gender balance requirement was among the list of [recommendations of that committee on August 29th](#). The committee held a public hearing on Wednesday,

Statement by Maureen White and Louise Conklin to the BCRC

We are co-presidents of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) Cedar Falls-Waterloo, an affiliate of the nonpartisan national AAUW. AAUW members work to advance equity for women and girls. AAUW Iowa and AAUW members across the state worked for passage of the gender balance laws. We oppose the committee’s August 29 “*Recommendation 5: Allow the most qualified Iowans to serve on boards and commissions by repealing the arbitrary gender-balance requirement.*”

We support the gender balance law because the law works, it does not prevent anyone from serving, and the law provides for good government through representation that is reflective of the population.

Iowa led the way among U.S. states when it **required** gender balance on appointed state boards and commissions. Data show that since bipartisan passage in April 1987, Republican and Democrat Iowa governors and state senators have honored the law and maintained gender balance on appointed state boards and commissions.

The 2009 law, also passed with bipartisan support, effectively only **recommends** gender balance for appointed municipal and county boards and commissions. It contained a provision for “good faith effort” to attain balance, with no accompanying consequences, resulting in weaker compliance. However, as of 2022, an average 61% of county boards and

September 6. AAUW Iowa co-president Kathie Farris was one of those who spoke at the hearing. AAUW Iowa and local branch members were active supporters of the gender balance legislation. We do not want to do away with the law.

You Can Help! The deadline for submitting comments to the BCRC has been extended to **September 17**. Please consider emailing your viewpoints on this or other recommendations from the committee at BCRCcomments@iowa.gov. See the excellent letter by AAUW Cedar Falls-Waterloo Co-Presidents Maureen White and Louise Conklin below. Your email does not have to be as long or detailed as theirs, but it is included here because the information is valuable. The committee’s report is due to the governor by September 30. The committee needs to hear from more Iowans since only 50 or so were able to speak at the public hearing.

commissions were gender balanced. Of the 67 cities reporting data, 62% said their boards and commissions were gender balanced. This is an improvement over the status in 2009, when fewer than 20% of city and county boards and commissions were gender balanced. (Catt Center, ISU data)

Secondly, claims that the law makes it hard to appoint “the best, most qualified” are not supported by fact and often are meant to imply that women are not as competent or qualified as men. Levels of educational and professional attainment, as well as community engagement of women, disqualify that argument. Some boards and commissions have requirements (e.g. political party, military veteran, specific profession) that applicants must meet while others have none; accordingly, not everyone is “qualified” for appointment. We know of no good reason to eliminate either a requirement or recommendation for gender balance. It’s true that sometimes an applicant may need to wait for an opening to arise, but delay is not the same as denial.

If the number of state boards and commissions is decreased by over 100 as proposed, there will be significantly fewer potential state appointees to find, weakening the argument that it’s too difficult to fill positions. Fewer appointees would lighten that task.

It’s hard for organizations, community groups and even government to find volunteers and leaders willing to give of their time, but it’s not impossible.

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That was true years ago when gender balance laws were passed and it's true today. We know Iowans are capable of doing hard things, including balancing gender representation.

Lastly, the proposal to eliminate the gender balance law is contrary to good public policy. Tired old arguments that gender balance is a "quota system" and "social engineering" and no longer needed because the "gender imbalance has been corrected" are not persuasive. Just look at the make-up of our Legislature or Congress or corporate suites and you see that is not the case. Government is supposed to work for all the people, not just some. It's beneficial to have provisions that ensure that boards and commissions are diverse and provide for a variety of perspectives, viewpoints, and life experiences. The current gender balance law provides for at least one type of diversity and we should not do away with that.

According to the Governor's June 23 press release, "The Boards and Commissions Review Committee, created in the Governor's alignment bill, is responsible for reviewing the efficiency and effectiveness of all boards, commissions, and other similar entities created in Iowa law and making recommendations for the continuation, elimination, consolidation, or reorganization of those boards and commissions as needed." To propose eliminating Iowa's long-standing and exemplary gender

balance law without providing any sort of evidence to support the recommendation is quite a leap as relates to "reviewing efficiency and effectiveness." We're unaware of data presented to the public that the law in any way interferes with the "efficiency and effectiveness" of boards and commissions. In fact, Recommendation 5 can be read to conflict with the committee's "Finding 3: Iowa should strive for better public participation in its boards and commissions process." when it takes away one of the successful avenues for expanded participation. There is not even a tenuous relationship between Recommendation 5 and the committee's other charge of recommending "continuation, elimination, consolidation, or reorganization" of boards and commissions.

We'll conclude with part of a statement Maureen made to the subcommittee for SSB 1037 (repeal gender balance requirements), introduced this past legislative session, but which did not advance. "Laws reflect our values. Ask yourselves, is . . . repealing all gender balance requirements in the public interest and does it build a better and more fair government? Or does it tell half our population that we don't care whether they have a seat at the table?" Don't move Iowa backward—reject and remove Recommendation 5.

Thank you for your consideration of our viewpoint.

Maureen White & Louise Conklin, co-president AAUW Cedar Falls-Waterloo

Book Discussion—Visual Thinking, by Temple Grandin

Elaine Kresse, AAUW Davenport-Bettendorf President

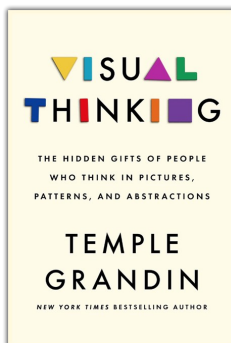
AAUW is a proud supporter of public education and open discussion about public education. The Davenport Bettendorf Branch is trying yet another outreach project not limited to Iowa residents. This is for AAUW members near and far. In the last Initiative we suggested reading Temple Grandin's new book, *Visual Thinking*.

Because Penny Foy from Cedar Rapids and I, Elaine Kresse from Davenport, are together in an online book discussion with others from around the world by email through the University of Iowa, we began discussing the possibility of such a discussion for us in AAUW. This has developed into an experiment. As a book discussion topic at the Davenport Bettendorf Branch level, there will be a zoom with all invited in February. Beyond that, Lois Enger, our

Webmaster and Penny Foy, also a tech person, and I are working to develop an email discussion of the book, chapter by chapter. There will also be the possibility of adding a zoom discussion or two.

We are still a little vague about how this will work. We need your help and expertise if you have advice. Lois has placed a discussion on our state website. She has asked Penny and me to try it out. I am asking the same of you. The book will be out this fall in paperback and is probably available at your library. If you think you would like to be part of this online discussion of *Visual*

Thinking, please go to <https://aauw-ia.aauw.net/discussion/> and register to tell us if you would like to be part of our first online book discussion blog. You will also be helping us with our experiment.



Reproductive Freedom in Iowa and Beyond

The Des Moines and eNetwork branches of AAUW will jointly sponsor a program by Planned Parenthood on October 24 at 7 pm in the Speed Lyceum in the Henning Student Center at Grand View University. All members of AAUW in Iowa are invited to participate, either by attending at Grand View University in person, or by joining in on Zoom. The program will be open to the public. The Henning Student Center is on East 14th Street and is building #8 on the [Grand View campus map](#). Visitor parking is south of the student center. The link to participate using Zoom is here: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2017201809?pwd=WXCyREhjcjI0ZlNQMUMtmZjIjCU0RQQT09>

Speakers will be Carolina Ramos and Gabriela Fuentes from Planned Parenthood. **Carolina Ramos** is an Advocacy Strategist at Planned Parenthood North Central States. She has a BA from Drake University in law and politics and society. She is currently working on a masters program in public policy at the University of Missouri. Her focus is grassroots organizing and activism within the community to advocate for reproductive justice.



Carolina Ramos

Talking about the next election, Carolina says, "Abortion rights are at stake in the upcoming election—*again*. Every small action, every new person who joins our email lists, every donation, and every person who votes is making a change."

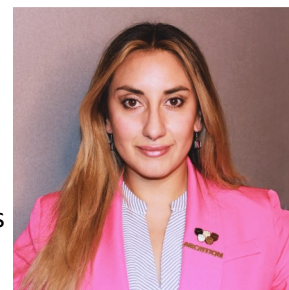
Gabriela Fuentes is the advocacy manager for Planned Parenthood in Iowa. She is originally from Bolivia, but also has citizenship in Chile and the United States. She has a BA in social communication studies and a Diploma in Higher Education from the Universidad Católica Boliviana, and a masters degree in communication and development from Ohio University.

Topics to be covered

- Introductions
- Planned Parenthood Structure
- Local debrief: Abortion access in IA and updates
- National debrief: Texas FCA Medicaid Litigation
- What NOT TO DO in this movement
- What's next
- Take action!

Gabriela says:

I still remind people that although this might feel overwhelming, this is not the time to feel discouraged. This will be a long fight, and we need to remain stronger than ever. There are many tactics and opportunities for everyone to take meaningful action. Everything counts. From following your local organizations on social media to bringing your friends to community gatherings to contacting your representatives to either thank them for the work they're doing or hold them accountable. Keep yourself informed, and always keep spreading the word that abortion is not stigma, it's health care.



Gabriela Fuentes

Outreach or a New Model for College/University

Elaine Kresse, College University Director

We've been actively working with the eNetwork to involve our college and university partners. Mary Ann Ahrens has taken the lead on the network's brochure project on human trafficking funded by our state board. We prepared a letter together and sent copies of the brochure to all our partner schools via snail mail.

Since that letter was sent, we have worked together with the eNetwork on a second collaboration blessed by the Iowa board. College and University representatives are being invited to join the eNetwork. This came about as we

welcomed St Luke's College representatives Angie Corderman and Dr. Shannon Merk into our state AAUW network. There isn't a branch in Sioux City. We realized then we needed to bring working together into the online world. All our c/u representatives are now able to join the eNetwork. Feel free to mention this to the colleges in your area. This has great potential for working together to promote our mission, learn from our college leaders, and help us identify our next distinguished faculty award winner.

AAUW Iowa Human Trafficking Prevention Outreach Project Update

Mary Ann Ahrens, Chair

Fall is nearly here, students are back in school, and many of our branches are beginning to meet and work on their plans of action for the year. Politically, election races at all levels are heating up and some people are getting beat up in the process. **If there was ever a time when our country needed AAUW and our valuable members focusing on critical issues, it is now!** Whether you have a working career, are retired, or are an at-home mom or dad, we are all busy and our time and talents are important. So, it is essential to focus because it helps us utilize human, monetary, and material resources more effectively.

We established this project because it was a public policy priority important within AAUW and attainable by our members. **It certainly could not be a better time for us to focus on this issue in Iowa. Let me tell you why.** We supported our state board who established this as a priority issue. Our April State Conference theme was "Our Time is Now" including a human trafficking workshop and an introduction to and distribution of the HT material. With the summer movie release of "Sound of Freedom" it continues to provide much needed visibility and awareness of child trafficking and is bringing in much-needed resources from everywhere. In addition, a central Iowa group of Rotary Clubs recently raised a significant amount of money for victims' use. Dr. George Belitsos, the founder and former chair of the Network Against Human Trafficking and Slavery (NAHT) in Ames, chaired that project. In addition, this year the Iowa legislature passed essential legislation. The NAHT Legislative Advocacy Team, chaired by AAUW Quad Cities member and past Iowa House Representative Maggie Tinsman has been busy working on key legislative priorities for the 2024 legislative session. In August, all Iowa legislators received project information at their homes and a thank you for their work.

How can we help? Let us continue our creative brainstorming to identify family, individuals, work, school, religious, recreational, college, issue, ethnic groups, and businesses to share our HT information. **Human trafficking touches every one of those groups!** Members at my annual area class reunion picnic received brochures. The Senior Center in WDM was interested in both Spanish and English brochures. There are now 8 other full-time centers

that are receiving the information in the metro. Each doctor and staff person in the Internal Medicine Department at Iowa Methodist Clinic received a brochure with one Nurse Practitioner sharing a frightening near incident at a local Target store. Jan Mitchell has been distributing brochures within the metro Dart Transportation Center in DM. The ISU faculty/staff members in the Ames branch requested 500 brochures for use within the university. In Storm Lake, project vice-chair Maxine Lampe is reaching out to their Latino community. She shared information with SALUD, a multicultural health organization, has contacted several sororities and will visit the colleges and universities in NW Iowa.

Don't hesitate to distribute brochures at either Republican or Democratic events since it is a non-controversial, non-partisan issue. **Keep in mind** that school boards and city council elections are coming up November 7. In addition, many local through national candidates are campaigning in Iowa daily. Take advantage of the visits, forums, county/city fundraisers, and meet and greet opportunities to speak about the project and/or pass out brochures. A supply of brochures was taken to our Iowa third district (16 counties) political leadership conference in August. **Have you contacted your legislators yet?** I did and Senator Claire Celsi is putting our digital brochure on Facebook for the Iowans for Public



Education group. Representative Rev. Mary Madison is placing brochures in her church. *Even if you distribute a brochure to someone who does not share it, that is ONE MORE PERSON who became aware of the issue.* Occasionally, I sense somewhat of a hesitation to identify and distribute brochures because the word SEX is included and results in dated behaviors such as "we don't talk about those things in public." We continue to make a difference because we are talking about this. The above are a few examples/ideas for distribution. **Please contact me with your project strategies so we can share them with others. Send any requests for brochures to me at 501 Grand Avenue, West Des Moines, IA 50265, or contact me at maahrens@mchsi.com or call 319-240-5904.**

KUDOS to all of you who are supporting this project and reaching out in your communities! YOU are AWESOME!

Public Policy

Diane Kearns, AAUW Iowa Public Policy Co-Director

Summer is over and the fall temperatures have been arriving. My article for this month will be somewhat brief but I wanted to focus on a few issues.

The U.S. Congress reconvened August 14 after the summer recess. Much attention will be focused on whether the House and Senate can come to an agreement on government funding bills that must be passed by the end of the Fiscal Year, September 30. The two chambers are far apart on education funding and numerous provisions have been added to the bills, including measures to restrict abortion access and measures attacking members of the LGBTQ+ community, which will make the bills difficult to reconcile. These divisions could shut down the federal government unless sensible compromises can be agreed upon. AAUW is calling on Congress to pass a budget that gives federal agencies the resources they need to provide Americans with quality health care, an education free of discrimination, workplace protections, and other critical civil and human rights. AAUW will continue to be a voice calling for equity for women and girls. The lack of universal paid leave disproportionately impacts women. Congress can address these issues by passing a set of bills that would establish a national standard for paid family and medical leave and paid sick days. The Family and Medical Insurance Leave (FAMILY) Act would provide workers with up to 12 weeks of partial income when they take time for their own serious health condition or that of a family member, for the birth or adoption of child, or to address the effects of domestic violence or sexual assault. We are urging Congress to pass the Family Act and the Healthy Families Act. The U.S. Department of Education is developing final rules to strengthen the civil rights protections in Title IX, the law that prohibits sex discrimination in federally funded education programs. The rules were expected to be finalized by October; that deadline is unlikely to be met.

In the wake of June's Supreme Court decision overturning student debt cancellation, applications have been opened for a new, more affordable income-driven student loan repayment plan, Saving on a Valuable Education (SAVE). The new program comes as the current payment and interest pause ends in September and payments are to resume in October.

In Iowa, the Governor proposed the consolidation of over 200 state boards and commissions into 100. This was created under the state agency consolidation bill that the Governor signed during the legislative session. There are several issues of concern. It is felt that these measures

could put Iowans' health and safety at risk. A hearing was held Wednesday, September 6, with many speakers voicing their concerns. A special thank you to Kathie Farris, our co-president, who spoke with regard to gender balance on boards and commissions. Kathie stated in her remarks, "without the requirement, there would not be the pressure to find women to fill those jobs and it makes it a little easier to get your buddy rather than to look to find a qualified woman for the position." The committee, chaired by Kraig Paulsen, will meet again at 10:00 a.m. September 25 at the State Capitol before finalizing their proposal by the September 30 deadline.

AAUW is conducting a National Voter Registration Drive September 19. We have done this in the past in the high schools. An excellent opportunity to register those individuals to vote.

On September 6, I joined in a presentation from AAUW Public Policy where they introduced Bill Tracker-50. This is a new tool available to track legislation. It will replace the former State Net. It has much functionality and can be used to generate messages to elected officials with regard to specific pieces of legislation.

New Child Labor Law Violates Federal Law

The U.S. Department of Labor last week concluded that SF 542, the child labor expansion law passed by Iowa Republican leaders last spring, violates federal law, putting young Iowans at risk of dangerous jobs and creating confusing rules for Iowa businesses to follow. Their letter stated the Iowa law violates federal law by allowing 16-17 year olds to operate dangerous power-driven machines, engage in heavy manufacturing, and work in demolition, all of which are prohibited under federal child labor laws. The new law also does not require 16-17 year olds working in apprenticeship or student-learner roles to be registered by the US Department of Labor or state agency, which federal law requires. When state and federal labor laws conflict, the law providing the most protection must be followed, which in this instance is federal law.



AAUW Central States Regional Conference

October 19-21, 2023 - St. Louis, MO

Tentative Conference Program Schedule

THURSDAY, October 19, 2023

- 1:00 Conference Begins; Welcome; Overview
- 1:30 KEYNOTE: Challenges Facing Member-Driven Organizations, Lisa Maatz, Gender Equity Expert, Indep. Consultant
- 2:30 Women's Health and Reproductive Rights, Yamelsie Rodriguez, CEO Planned Parenthood, St. Louis Region
- 3:15 EITHER: A) Public Policy – Strengthening Advocacy: Working Across Generational Lines
Lisa Maatz, Gender Equity Expert, Independent Consultant
B) Unconscious Assumptions and Implicit Bias: We All Have Them – Now What Do We Do With Them?
Deanie Brown, Attorney, Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, Illinois Judicial Branch (via Zoom)
- 4:15 SWAP SHOPS (Branch Sharing)
- 5:30 Informal Dinner via Drury Kick Back buffet
Performance: HERstory - Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Sojourner Truth
Taste of St. Louis Treats

FRIDAY, October 20, 2023

- 8:30 KEYNOTE: This is Your AAUW, Gloria Blackwell, AAUW CEO (in person)
- 9:25 SWAP SHOPS (Branch Sharing)
- 10:30 Town Hall with Gloria Blackwell (Q&A session with attendees)
- 11:10 It's Complicated: The Causes and Consequences of the Gender Pay Gap, Karen Kedrowski, Director of Carrie Chapman Catt Center for Women and Politics; Professor of Political Science, Iowa State University
- 12:00 Lunch and Panel of National AAUW Board Members
- 12:45 Membership and the Degree Requirement Vote in 2024; and Leadership and Succession Planning
- 1:45 TRENDING TOPICS – Attend one of the four
LGBTQ+: TransParent
Censure, Cancellations and Book Bannings
Social Justice for All
Indigenous Cultures
- 2:35 TRENDING TOPICS – Attend one of the four
Period Poverty and the Pink Tax
Title IX in a Changing Landscape
Gen Z to Millennials Advocacy
Giving Birth in America
- 3:40 SWAP SHOPS (Branch Sharing)
- 4:40 AAUW Fund – What's In It For ME? Fundraising Basics! Sue Barley and Diane B. Ludwig, AAUW Fund Enthusiasts!
- 6:45 Legacy Circle Recognitions
- 7:00 Conference Dinner; AAUW of the Future – Panel of National Committee Members

SATURDAY, October 21, 2023

- 8:45 1619 Freedom School Project, Sheritta Stokes, VP of Freedom School Project and Co-Director of Curriculum ("Liberation through Literacy") Waterloo, Iowa
- 10:00 SWAP SHOPS (Branch Sharing)
- 10:30 Voting Rights and Challenges, Denise Lieberman, Director and Legal Counsel of MO Voter Protection Coalition
- 11:15 Lessons Learned and Great Ideas to Take Home
- Noon Conference Ends

Mixed in will be FUN breaks, Inclusion-Infusions, displays, and LOTS of networking opportunities!

Missouri Website has Info and Forms: aauw-mo.aauw.net

Questions? Contact: Karen Francis, MO State President, at karenbitzafrancis@yahoo.com or 314-223-4235