



IOWA INITIATIVE

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Co-President's Letter

Pat Higby, AAUW Iowa Co-President

Hello and welcome to another new year with AAUW Iowa! As one of your new co-presidents I wanted to update you on several items. First, at our June meeting of the incoming Board we established two special/ad hoc committees with chairs to promote AAUW's mission. Mary Ann Ahrens will continue her work on stopping human trafficking, and now she will also be reporting her work directly to the Board. Marti Anderson chairs our "Love for Red" committee to provide feminine hygiene products to enable girls to stay in school while they have their periods. We will be hearing more from each of them in the future. Karen Agee has volunteered to chair a Get Out The Vote committee, which we will ask the Board to approve at our next meeting.



Second, please read Diane Kearns's information about Public Policy. There is so much to do to regain the freedoms we have lost and safeguard what we have for women and girls in the future! To achieve this mission we are asking for volunteers to chair special/ad hoc committees. Their duties will be to collaborate with other organizations to identify actions we can take to protect and promote women and girls, inform the Board of these activities, update our members on the activities through the newsletter and website/Facebook posts, and request any funds needed for the projects. If you are passionate about gun safety, reproductive freedom, public education, or other issues, please contact Kim Folkers or myself to see how you can make a difference in the lives of women and girls! Remember what Margaret Mead said, " Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." You can do this!

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Next Steps from ACLU Iowa

With the help of AAUW members who circulated reproductive rights petitions, ACLU exceeded their goal of 7,500 signatures on their "We Are the Reproductive Freedom Majority" petitions. They have now sent those lists to all 150 members of the Iowa Legislature.

On June 28, the Iowa Supreme Court released a decision allowing Iowa's almost total abortion ban to go into effect. ACLU's response is included in this newsletter.

ACLU Iowa invites you to register for their upcoming volunteer webinar (Date TBD) for information on the next steps for their campaign. [Registration link here.](#)



Love for Red

Marti Anderson, Love for Red Ad Hoc Chair

In 2020, Maanya Pandey was a 15-year-old student at Waukee High School when she founded **Love For Red**. Today, she is majoring in Public Health on the Pre-Medicine track at the University of Iowa and continues to serve as President of Love for Red, which has operations in Des Moines and Iowa City.



Love For Red is a 501(c)(3) non-profit that strives to uplift the people crushed by the hardships of period poverty. They believe feeling clean and having dignity during your period should not be a privilege only some can enjoy. Providing menstrual products to those unable to purchase the necessities ensures that people can live with dignity while on their period, no matter where they live.

Maanya had read of the limited quantity of menstrual products available to women in prison and heard stories from women who had struggled due to accessibility. She researched and discovered the problem of “period poverty” defined by the American Medical Women’s Association as “inadequate access to menstrual hygiene tools and education, including but not limited to sanitary products, washing facilities, and waste management.”

A survey in Obstetrics & Gynecology of low-income women in St. Louis found that nearly two-thirds couldn't afford menstrual hygiene products during the previous year, and 20% of women had this problem every month. They made do with socks, rags, tissues, toilet paper, diapers, paper towels from public bathrooms, and even cardboard because they couldn't afford pads or tampons. Some regularly had to decide whether to purchase food or menstrual products.

Learn more about **Love For Red** at <https://www.loveforred.org/>.

Contributions can be made at <https://givebutter.com/LoveForRedDonation>

Testimonials: “Urban Dreams has been partnering with Love for Red and accepting donations to give to our community for over two and a half years! We are grateful that we can help be able to ensure that ANYONE and EVERYONE has access to what they need, because

menstrual products are not a luxury; they are a necessity. **THANK YOU** Love for Red for your service, education, and advocacy in this matter, and thank you for letting us be a part of it.” **RACHEL MANNA, URBAN DREAMS**

“Our Homeless Support Services department received a generous donation of pads and tampons to distribute to people experiencing homelessness. The donation has made a huge difference in the lives of the people we serve and making sure they are treated with dignity and respect. The process of working with Love For Red was so easy, and they were eager to assist our clients!” **JORIE HIDRI, PRIMARY HEALTH CARE**

“We formed a partnership with Love For Red during the 2023-2024 school year. We have been overwhelmed by the amazing support this organization has provided to our students and families. East has over 2,000 students – many of whom are from low-income families. We worked together to create product bins that are restocked monthly in our girls’ restrooms. By having products readily available for use in our bathrooms, we have reduced the time wasted coming down to the office for supplies. We’ve also engaged several students to volunteer for this important cause and raise awareness in the school about period poverty. We are so grateful for Love For Red!!” **MADLINE CANO COOK, EAST HIGH SCHOOL – DES MOINES**



love for red

Show Your Support for Choice

Would you like to do something to demonstrate your support for women’s rights to make their own healthcare choices? [Save this graphic](#) from Interfaith Alliance of Iowa, and post it on Facebook.



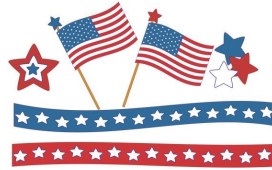
About the Iowa Supreme Court Decision on Abortion

Diane Kearns, AAUW Iowa Public Policy Director

With regard to the recent decision by the Iowa Supreme Court, the instructions to the lower court will be formally sent in 21 days but for now abortion remains legal in Iowa for up to 20 weeks of pregnancy. It is unclear how long the District Court will take after that. Every Iowan needs to understand what's at stake. With the November elections approaching, every person elected to public office should believe in and support an individual's right to

make their own healthcare decisions. No elected official should be making that decision. Legislators need to be held accountable. WHEN IOWANS ENTER THE VOTING BOOTH THIS FALL, THIS NEEDS TO BE KEPT IN MIND. Those legislators that supported this legislation can be found on the Iowa General Assembly website at www.legis.iowa.gov.

Thank you for fighting for reproductive rights.



Repro Kits at Juneteenth Celebration in Waterloo

Karen Agee, Cedar Falls-Waterloo Branch

AAUW Cedar Falls-Waterloo, in coordination with AAUW Iowa, implemented a new project working with the Family Planning Council of Iowa (FPCI) to distribute Reproductive Health Kits at the Black Hawk County NAACP's Juneteenth celebration on June 15th at Sullivan Park in Waterloo. It was a very productive day as the members gave out several Repro Kits and connected with other agencies to help us continue handing out the kits. We also made connections with potential members and discussed assistance with other projects.

The Repro Kits were developed as a way to help bridge the gap in access to sexual and reproductive healthcare and to

provide useful items privately and discreetly, according to Tara Sochet of FPCI. Each Reproductive Health Kit ("Repro Kit") contains a booklet on sexual and reproductive health, condoms, lubricant, a pregnancy test, and emergency contraception. (Emergency contraception prevents pregnancy after sex; it does not interrupt a pregnancy that is already established.) Each Repro Kit is packed in a discreet purple bag with no markings or words. The kits help FPCI provide much-needed reproductive health supplies to areas and communities that struggle to access such care. In addition, anyone with an Iowa mailing address can request a Repro Kit (also for free) on the website, <https://fpcouncil.org/request-a-repro-kit/>.



Lori Schneider, Shelia Bullock, and Maria Murphy. Photo by Susan Langan



Linda Morgan, Patricia Gadelmann, and Susan Langan. Photo by Shawn Langan

Public Policy

Diane Kearns, AAUW Iowa Public Policy Director

I hope everyone is enjoying the Spring/Summer. It has certainly been warm. My heart goes out to those affected by the flooding in Northwest Iowa.

This is going to be a busy election season, and along that line we need to remember our public policy priorities when choosing candidates to represent us on the state and national level. The state board has been meeting and discussing various mechanisms to address some of those priority issues. It has been discussed to form ad hoc committees that will work under the Public Policy Director and Board to address these issues.



The following is a breakdown of our AAUW Public Policy Priorities. If anyone would be interested in serving on one of the ad hoc committees please let the Co-Presidents (Kim Folkers and Pat Higby) know.

To promote a strong system of public education and lifelong learning that promotes gender fairness, equity, diversity, and inclusivity, and to address the barriers and implicit biases that hinder the advancement of women and girls.

1. Adequate and equitable funding of public education.
2. Affordable community college, college and university tuition. Alleviating the debt burden that disproportionately impacts borrowers of color.
3. Availability of and adequate funding for programs that expand opportunity for girls, i.e., STEM.
4. Vigorous enforcement of Title IX and other civil rights laws pertaining to education, making schools safe.
5. Halting the flow of students from schools to prisons.
6. Opposition to use of public funding for elementary and secondary non-public, charter, or home schools that do not meet accountability standards.

To achieve economic security for all women.

1. Pay equity and fairness in public and private employment.
2. Increased state minimum wage.
3. Equitable opportunities for workplace advancement.
4. Workplace benefits including paid family, medical, and sick leave.
5. Collective bargaining rights for public or private sector employees and the right to unionize without fear of intimidation.

6. Funding for facilities and programs to transition women from the criminal justice system back to their communities.
7. Protecting and strengthening retirement benefits, including state-run retirement programs.
8. Opposition to privatized Medicaid.

To guarantee gender equality, individual rights, and social justice for a diverse and inclusive society.

1. Measures to facilitate, protect access to, and expand the right of all citizens to vote.
2. Equitable representation of women and minorities in elected, appointed, policy making, and judicial positions.
3. Freedom from violence and from fear of violence, including gun violence and hate crimes in homes, schools, workplaces, and communities and addressing the needs of victims of violence.
4. Rigorous enforcement of laws against human trafficking and support for programs to aid victims.
5. Access to public education and basic health and safety programs, without requirements for proof of citizenship beyond those included in federal law.
6. Universal access to quality, affordable healthcare, including mental health care.
7. Self-determination of one's reproductive health decisions.
8. Protection of the elderly through strict enforcement of nursing home regulations.
9. Freedom in the definition of self and family, including protection from discrimination.

The above is a brief outline of AAUW Public Policy Priorities. If you wish further information, refer to Public Policy Program 2022-2024 at aauw-ia.aauw.net/publicpolicy/public-policy-program/, which gives a complete definition of each area.

There are a few areas that we wish to highlight, if you are interested and want to serve on an ad hoc committee, including gun violence, reproductive freedom, getting out the vote, and public education. If your passion is one of those areas, please contact the co-presidents. For example, if you are an educator, your area of expertise may be with regard to public education. If you know a victim of gun violence, there is another area where your expertise would be of value. Please take the time to consider the areas mentioned or any others which may be of interest.

Palo Alto County Branch Helps with Iowa Lakes Summer STEM Festival

Roberta Hersom, Palo Alto County Branch

Two members of the Palo Alto County AAUW branch volunteered to assist at the STEM Festival held at Iowa Lakes Community College in Estherville on June 20th. Rosemary Mathews and Roberta Hersom each led and assisted groups of 15 youth from grades 4-10 in five different STEM activities.

The Northwest Iowa STEM Region hosted 80-some youth primarily from Palo Alto, Dickinson, Emmet, and Clay counties. The camp's purpose was to expose youth to STEM skills and careers. The camp was funded by the Iowa STEM Council. Iowa State Extension and Outreach staff from the four counties along with help from the AAUW

branch participated in the program.

Youth attended five different activities. In the Chemistry tract, youth learned about what causes fire and used balloons to extinguish a small flame. The Food Science activity was making applesauce and determining what works best to keep fresh apples from turning brown. Youth took turns flying drones in the Aviation tract and used their reasoning and problem-solving skills in the Computer Science tract to play Spy Code and navigate BeeDots and Ozobots. In the Environmental Studies tract, the youth learned how drones and radio waves can track turtles. Extension and Outreach staff and Iowa Lakes instructors led the sessions.



Upper left—Roberta Hersom and Rosemary Mathews greet and register students as they arrive.

Upper right—Students learn how to make a fire extinguisher with hydrogen peroxide, baking soda, and a balloon.

Lower left—Roberta and students play a deductive reasoning game.

Lower right—A student works on navigating a drone.



The Impact of Abortion Bans

Pat Higby, AAUW Iowa Co-President

I have been reading about the impacts of abortion bans for several years, but I am not an expert or a medical professional. I can, however, predict some consequences from Iowa's six-week abortion ban based on the results in Texas and Idaho. Following are just some of the issues we can expect:

1. Our maternity deserts will grow, as more obstetricians leave the state and fewer choose to intern here.
2. The birth rate will grow, but so will the death rate for babies. Mothers will be forced to prepare for both a birth and a funeral for nonviable fetuses. The emotional impact will be devastating.
3. The death rate for pregnant women will increase. This is due to a rise in domestic violence as well as the absence of abortion for health care.
4. Many more women will turn to abortion medication and out of state abortion facilities. Low income

women may not have this option. Thus the death rate for low income women, which is already greater than for high income women, will increase. Many of these dead will be women of color. This is a racial as well as health issue.

5. Young people planning to start families will leave the state. It is just not a safe place to be pregnant. Some of these will be your children or grandchildren.

So what can we do? Most importantly, we must VOTE our displeasure in November! Getting out the vote has never been more important. Second, we can help women and girls avoid pregnancy by distributing Reproductive Health Kits for the Family Planning Council of Iowa. Go to our Iowa AAUW website for more details. Together with other organizations across Iowa we can regain control over our own bodies!

ACLU Iowa Statement about the Iowa Supreme Court Decision Allowing Abortion Ban

Note: AP style avoids the use of "fetal heartbeat" bill since this legislation addresses neither a fetus (it's still an embryo) nor a heartbeat (it hasn't yet developed a heart).

DES MOINES, IA — The Iowa Supreme Court today dealt a devastating blow to Iowans' access to essential health care by announcing that the state's extreme abortion ban can soon take effect while the lawsuit challenging the ban proceeds. The ban had been temporarily blocked from taking effect by a lower court's order. The Court has now reversed that temporary block and is sending the case back to the lower court with instructions to remove it.

As Chief Justice Christensen explains in her powerful dissent from the Court's decision, the ban will "force pregnant women (and young girls) to endure and suffer through life-altering health complications," and "the ominous consequences of affirming this level of government intrusion will negatively impact all current and future Iowans." Chief Justice Christensen notes that the Court's decision "perpetuates the gendered hierarchies of old where women were second-class citizens" and that it also "casts doubt on the stability of rights like contraception, interracial marriage, and same-sex marriage."

Chief Justice Christensen's dissent also details many of the ways the poorly crafted "impractical exceptions" for abortions in situations involving rape, incest, certain fetal abnormalities incompatible with life, miscarriages, or medical emergencies fail to offer pregnant people "any meaningful opportunity to terminate a pregnancy when it threatens their health or ability to carry a child to term in the future"

and "are unattainable for many pregnant women and girls." As the Chief Justice powerfully points out, "Frankly, in many of these situations, they serve as another example of how this statute prioritizes the unborn over the living, placing pregnant women in grave harm in the process."

Although abortion remains legal in Iowa for now, abortion as early as six weeks of pregnancy will soon be prohibited after the case goes back to the district court. Under the Iowa court rules, it will take at least 21 days for the case to go back to the district court. Abortion will remain legal during that time. The ban includes narrow exceptions for pregnancies resulting from rape or incest if reported during limited timeframes, for fetal abnormalities, and for pregnant patients experiencing certain medical emergencies. But as Chief Justice Christensen explains in her dissent, those exceptions "ring hollow" and "are fraught with problems" that will limit patients' ability to access care.

Iowa politicians passed the abortion ban during an unprecedented one-day special session last summer after the Court rejected a similar ban passed in 2018, but the new ban has been blocked by a temporary injunction since shortly after it was signed. Gov. Kim Reynolds asked the Court to reverse the district court decision blocking the six-week ban from taking effect during the lawsuit.

The lawsuit challenging the ban was brought by Planned Parenthood Federation of America and the ACLU of Iowa on behalf of Planned Parenthood of the Heartland (a wholly owned subsidiary of Planned Parenthood North Central States), the Emma Goldman Clinic, and Dr. Sarah Traxler.

Human Trafficking Prevention July Update

Mary Ann Ahrens, Chair AAUW Iowa 2024-26 Human Trafficking Prevention Ad Hoc Committee

Summer is a busy time of the year with many events, festivals, fairs, sports activities/ competitions, along with pre-election fundraisers taking place. All these events are perfect places to hand out or place our brochures for the taking. In Iowa, there are 99 County Fairs taking place this summer, most of which are in July and August. **Please contact both the county Democratic and Republican parties and leave a supply of brochures for their Fair display booths.** As a reminder this issue has the full support of all our legislators and is non-controversial and non-partisan. It is not about which party but this issue! *We could use your help.* Contact us if you need brochures.

The **good news** is that because of our hard work and your support, our human trafficking project, initiated by the eNetwork Branch, has been approved by the new state board for two years. Ahrens will chair an HT ad hoc committee that reports to the board and will be a non-voting member of the board to share information and enhance communication. The question is what should be HT's next steps for us in AAUW? With your feedback and creative ideas, we will find a path. *We are putting together the committee. If you are interested in this issue, please contact Ahrens so we can continue our work together.* With the escalation of national and international conflicts, many women and girls separated from their families are caught up in prostitution to survive. The importance of our work is critical to bringing about change to benefit the people of Iowa! The complete HT Annual Report was included in our state annual meeting

folder.

Other countries continue to work on assistance and prevention. Maxine Lampe, vice chair of our HT Project, saw the following printed on the back of the *do not disturb* door hanger at her hotel while on vacation in Stockholm earlier this summer. It is a creative way to address this issue! A great idea!

PLEASE NO CLEANING TODAY.

Leaving prostitution and human trafficking is a difficult process and the need for support is huge that's why Talita exists.

Talita offers a one-year rehabilitation program and 97% of those undergoing the program leave prostitution for good. Nordic Light Hotels are very proud of our cooperation with Talita and that you as our guest also want to contribute.

Hang the sign on your door before bedtime and you will forgo cleaning and donate SEK 20 directly to Talita. Nordic Light will double the amount and together we donate SEK 40 per night.

We wish you a wonderful stay with us and thank you so much for your contribution.

At times we might think we are the only ones pursuing this issue. We are not alone and know that it takes a global approach, and we are all in this together!

For questions or brochures contact Mary Ann Ahrens, maahrens@mchsi.com 319-240-5904, 501 Grand Avenue, West Des Moines, IA 50265.

For Branch Officers

AAUW National Membership Dues Rates

April 1 kicked off the 2025 Fiscal Year (FY25) membership dues collection process for AAUW branches. FY25 National dues remain the same: Annual National (\$72), Students (\$18.81), and Lifetime (\$1,440). As of January 2024, all National dues are **FULLY** tax deductible!

College/University Membership dues are \$250 and include two free national memberships for their named representatives and free national student memberships.

Finance Officers Must Respond — Don't Lose Your Tax-Exempt Status with the IRS

All AAUW-affiliated entities must file a tax return each year. The simplest option for non-profits is to use a Form 990-N, which AAUW can prepare on your behalf if your annual gross receipts are \$50,000 or less.

To have AAUW file your 990-N, complete the group exemption form now through **October 15** in the [Community Hub](#). Go to MY AFFILIATIONS, then click the button next to your affiliate name. Choose TAX INFORMATION, then ADD NEW TAX DETAILS. The principal officer is generally the finance officer. Verify that your Employer Identification Number (EIN) is correct, so your filing isn't rejected. If you do not qualify to file Form 990-N, AAUW cannot file your return. Please explore other options (e.g., Form 990, Form 990EZ, or Form 990PF).

Join AAUW for Office Hours!

Attending our virtual national Office Hours is a great way to address questions you may have in your role as a member leader. Join one of our hour-long sessions on Tuesdays at 3 p.m. ET [here](#) or Thursdays at 3:30 p.m. ET [here](#).