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Co-President’s Letter

Kim Folkers, AAUW Iowa Co-President

In the weeks since the election, many of us have been struggling to make sense of the outcomes. While we try to embrace AAUW’s value of being non-partisan, it is impossible to believe in and work for AAUW’s mission of Gender Equity for Women and Girls, and not be appalled by the way in which many candidates and their supporters turned their backs on women’s issues, and in some cases, even more directly derided and worked to strip U.S. women of their hard-earned rights. As AAUW members, there has always been work to be done to help protect and advance women’s rights, but as many of you have said, we have reached a level of threat not encountered in many of our lifetimes. Once we have given ourselves some time to regroup, we will need to work quickly to determine where our next efforts are best focused.



“Nevertheless, she persisted,” the slogan that went viral in 2017 after members of the U.S. Senate attempted to silence Senator Elizabeth Warren, seems particularly appropriate at this moment. A great deal of persistence will be required in our branches, across the state of Iowa, and throughout our nation, as we fight for women’s rights in the months and years ahead. I continue to be proud to be part of an organization that is so clearly focused on equity for women and girls. May we persist together, finding ways to leverage our commitment to fact-based, principled, inclusive, and intersectional advocacy that ultimately brings true change.

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AAUW Reacts to 2024 National Election Results

November 6, 2024

WASHINGTON – Today, the AAUW (American Association of University Women) responded to Donald J. Trump’s reelection as 47th president of the United States.

“The election results are extremely sobering, especially on the heels of a hyperpartisan, gridlocked Congress,” said Gloria L. Blackwell, CEO, AAUW. “AAUW is committed to holding all elected officials accountable about women’s rights, bodily autonomy, and access to education and economic opportunity, particularly for women of color.”

As president, Trump appointed the three conservative U.S. Supreme Court Justices who supported overturning Roe vs. Wade and women’s right to abortion care. His Supreme Court picks also helped overturn affirmative action in college admission decisions. Colleges and universities have since reported a downturn in students of color being admitted to their institutions, as a result.

This election cycle, AAUW also championed 10 state ballot measures that would codify into state laws and constitutions women’s rights to abortion access without government interference. Of the 10, seven states passed measures to maintain or expand abortion access.

“When women are able to make abortion care decisions for ourselves, we’re able to control our health and economic security,” said Meghan Kissell, AAUW’s senior director for policy and member advocacy. “A second Trump presidency puts this fundamental right further in jeopardy.”

This electoral outcome means AAUW will double-down in its preparation for the Trump administration and Congress. The organization will deliver its agenda for the 119th Congress ahead of the new session.

“A functioning democracy demands work every day of the year,” said Blackwell. “It is now, after an election, when the real work begins. We must come together and continue the fight to advance equity for women.”



AAUW Iowa Human Trafficking Task Force News

Mary Ann Ahrens, HT Task Force Chair (maahrens@mchsi.com)

Human trafficking is taking place and can take place most anywhere. The latest news from the Iowa Network Against Human Trafficking and Slavery (NAHT) shared the following information about 2 lawsuits that were settled with Western Iowa Tech Community College in Sioux City.

Western Iowa Tech Community College is settling a second federal lawsuit filed by international students alleging the institution participated in human trafficking. The college will pay \$2.3 million as part of a settlement with ten Brazilian students who filed the suit.

In April, Western Iowa Tech agreed to pay \$3 million to settle a similar lawsuit from 13 Chilean students. The lawsuits allege that the college secured visas for the students to enroll in an international education program, urged them to work in local factories, then used part of their paychecks to recoup the costs of the program. The students said they were promised work experience in culinary arts and robotics.

The lawsuits claim that Tur-Pak Foods, which runs a nearby food-processing plant, and Royal Canin USA, which operates a dog food factory, paid about \$15 per hour for students' labor, but with an arrangement that roughly half of that would go to the college to offset tuition and other student expenses. The two companies were also named as



defendants in the suits, as were some college employees and J&L Staffing and Recruiting, which allegedly helped to place the students at the companies. All defendants denied wrongdoing as reported by Clark Kauffman, *Iowa Capital Dispatch*. For more detailed information access Iowa's NAHT website: <https://iowanah.org>, blog article by Dr. George Belitsos entitled, "[Iowa College Settles the Second of Two Human Trafficking Lawsuits.](#)"

The **2025 Iowa NAHT Legislative Agenda** has been established in preparation for the January start of the Iowa Ninety-Second General Assembly Legislative Session. As Diane Kearns, AAUW Iowa Public Policy Chair and members/branches prepare for Lobby Day on Wednesday, February 12, 2025, this progressive information will help inform each of us as we continue to advocate in many ways to strengthen victim assistance.

AAUW Iowa Task Force members include Mary Ann Ahrens, Maxine Lampe, and Marielle Sweborg.

2025 NAHT Legislative Agenda:

NAHT requests the Iowa Legislature adopt Safe Harbor Laws to protect minors against prosecution for any crimes committed while they were trafficked and ensure that children who are victims of trafficking are not criminalized but instead redirected to appropriate support and services.

Establish a Human Trafficking Survivor Services Fund

NAHT requests an allocation of \$1M for Human Trafficking Survivor Services. Iowa currently has eight organizations that provide residential programs solely or primarily geared specifically for the unique needs of survivors of human trafficking. A list and map of these facilities were provided in the October issue of Iowa Initiative.

Amend Iowa Code 710A

NAHT proposes amendments to the definition of child sex trafficking victims by removing the requirement for a third-party controller, which can limit the protection and support available to these vulnerable individuals.

Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Screenings

NAHT requests state agencies be charged with screening children referred to them for commercial sexual exploitation (CSEC). Such screenings are critical because CSEC victims often go unidentified due to a lack of proper training and protocols among those who first encounter them.

Strengthen Victim Assistance - Pass Key Components of 2024's HSB 746

NAHT requests the Iowa Legislature:

- Direct the Iowa Office to Combat Human Trafficking to facilitate an annual meeting of stakeholders to develop legislative proposals to bolster anti-human trafficking efforts by submitting a report of recommendations to the governor and general assembly for the next 5 years.
- Extend the civil statutes of limitation for sexual abuse or human trafficking of a minor to 5 years after the victim has reached 18 years.
- Require the DHHS to develop a plan to increase the availability of restoration facilities and protective services to juvenile victims of human trafficking.
- Create a Joint Unit between the Attorney General's Office and the Iowa Office to Combat Human Trafficking to investigate and prosecute human trafficking cases.

NCCWSL Changes

Elaine Kresse, College/University Director

AAUW was well represented at the Way Up conference for college professionals. The women we talked to were genuinely interested and took our new brochures back to their schools. Mary Ann Ahrens took the lead with working on our new stand up poster and brought it to Coralville. She also represented the human trafficking issue well. Kim Folkers was there and was able to make an excellent contact for her branch. Mary Helen Stefaniak sold and signed her books and made great connections for the eNetwork. Ann Kiche connected with friends which were great connections for me to energize the University of Iowa membership.

Last month I promised to have the new information on how to register your possible attendees. We did have a power point advertising NCCWSL; that is exciting but on hold right now. I don't have that information. AAUW is no longer the lead organization. AAUW will still offer scholarships but they can only be offered to student members.

Young women who are interested in attending NCCWSL need to reach out to their colleges about applications, working together wherever that might be possible. The Davenport-Bettendorf branch works well with Eastern Iowa Community College for forums and in November we had a great audience for *Gridshock*. We must keep AAUW

in their focus. Remember, too, that if you would like to meet with a contact at a college in your town, I will be happy to help or go with you to meet a contact at the school.

AAUW Statement on NCCWSL Changes

Hosting NCCWSL comes at a high cost, but the financial support has not risen to meet the challenge. Ultimately NCCWSL costs are unsustainable for the health and long-term viability of AAUW.

That's why I'm heartened to share that NCCWSL is not going away. Beginning in 2025, NCCWSL will be organized and administered by NASPA – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education.

We encourage your branch to continue to promote NCCWSL to college women in your local communities. AAUW will have a presence at the conference, as a speaker, exhibitor, presenter and promotional supporter. What will change is the administrative, financial and programmatic oversight and planning — NASPA will be responsible for the planning and execution of the conference moving forward. Registration, for example, will be made available via NASPA's website and registration platform rather than through AAUW.

SAVE THE DATE

Save the Date!

AAUW Iowa 2025 State Conference Saturday, April 26th, 2025
Diamond Event Center, 5307 Caraway Lane, Cedar Falls, IA 50613

SAVE THE DATE

Thoughts as We Gear Up for 2025

Diane Kearns. AAUW Iowa Public Policy Director

I hope everyone is recovering from the elections. I was hoping to see a woman President in my lifetime but I also have concerns for my granddaughters. There are so many issues regarding women's rights which may be in jeopardy. We must continue to remember our Public Policy priorities with regard to reproductive freedom, public education, vigorous enforcement of Title IX and other civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination or harassment, collective bargaining rights for public and private sector employees and the right of workers to unionize. We must continue to work to guarantee gender equality, individual rights and social justice. The AAUW Public Policy Priorities can be found on our website at www.aauw-ia.aauw.net. The 2025 Iowa General Assembly

will convene on January 13, 2025. At this point in time, it is difficult to know what legislation will be brought forward. I will continue to monitor legislation as I have done in the past and notify the branches with updates on a regular basis. Our AAUW Lobby Day is scheduled for February 12 from 9:00 until 11:00 meeting in Room 305. This is the room where we usually meet. I will send out notices to the various Senator and Representative chairs, vice chairs and ranking members of the committees of interest which include Education, Judiciary, Health Human Services and Labor and Workforce. Others may be added if needed relating to legislation. We will continue to utilize our Public Policy priorities as legislation is introduced. Everyone enjoy a great holiday season!

Cedar Rapids Members Meet for Coffee, Discussion, and Membership

Fourteen members of the Cedar Rapids branch met at the local Feedwell Café for discussion of current events of national and state interest.



Seated: Millie Peshek, Linda Armitage, Barb Goings, Sue Jorgensen, Penny Foy, Deborah Reed, Gisela Stefe, Sharon Vana. Standing: Anne Kiche, Trudy Sundermann, Jeaneal Weeks, Gwen Randall, Kate Varcoe, Deanna Howard. Missing: Erica Yoder.

AAUW Honors the Legacy of Lilly Ledbetter

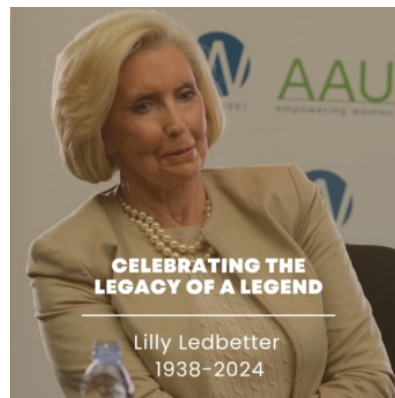
AAUW Press Release

AAUW honors the recent passing of Lilly Ledbetter and her outstanding legacy, which will impact women well into the future. She was the pioneer of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009 to ensure all women receive fair pay for their work.

Ms. Ledbetter's story resonated with so many women fighting for fair pay. After almost 20 years of working at Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co., Ms. Ledbetter received a note revealing that she, the only female supervisor, was being paid 40 percent less than her male peers. Ms. Ledbetter filed a gender discrimination lawsuit in 1998 that made its way to the U.S. Supreme Court, only to have the court say in 2007 that she had been paid unfairly long enough to make it legal.

Ms. Ledbetter and AAUW had a long-lasting, strong, and productive relationship, and we held her in high esteem

as an unwavering icon and trailblazer in the fight for equal pay. Together, Ms. Ledbetter, AAUW, and countless other organizations advocating for equal pay participated in marches, wrote letters, and sent emails which motivated Congress to pass the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act in 2009. Today, we continue her legacy by championing equal pay legislation such as the Paycheck Fairness Act, which would give workers new tools for ensuring that employers pay women and men equally for equal work.



As Lilly said in a [Q&A session](#) with AAUW, "The gender pay gap is everybody's issue." Lilly Ledbetter never stopped fighting for gender pay equity. The laws at the time failed her and yet she never stopped advocating for better laws and better pay for women. In her memory and in her honor, AAUW vows to continue the fight.