



IOWA INITIATIVE

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Come to Lobby Day!

Lobby Day will be Wednesday, February 12, from 9:00 a.m. until 12:00 Noon. We will meet in Room 305 in the Iowa State Capitol. Those attending will receive a name badge, but feel free to bring your own if you have one. Lunch will be on your own (there is a cafeteria in the Capitol). We will meet briefly at 1:00 p.m. for a wrap-up. We want to make sure that we have enough handouts for everyone, so please let Diane Kearns know if you are coming. diane_kearns@hotmail.com

Ground floor restrooms are best, so stop there first. To find room 305, use the elevator at the northeast part of the building, and take it to the 3rd floor. Turn to your left, go down a hallway, and you are there.

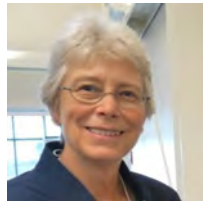
IN THIS ISSUE:

Come to Lobby Day	1
Co-Presidents' Letter	1
Spring Conference	2
Cedar Rapids Holiday Brunch	2
Contact Iowa Lawmakers	3
Human Trafficking Proclamations	4
Support for Survivors of Human Trafficking	5
Get to Know the eNetwork Branch.....	6
AAUW Denounces Court Decision on Title IX	6
Periods with Dignity	7
Algona's Community and Culture Connections	8
Remembering Janet Heinicke	9
UO Nurse Winds Innovator Prize	10
President Biden Says ERA is Law	10

Co-President's Letter

Pat Higby, AAUW Iowa Co-President

Is your Branch having difficulty finding leaders? Perhaps it is time to change your Bylaws and Policies to reflect changes in our lives. For example, our Iowa Bylaws require a six-year commitment by Presidents. How can that be, when the term is just two years? Because the person serves two years as President-Elect, two years as President, and two years as Past-President. It is pretty hard to find someone able to dedicate that amount of time!



A second issue I have heard is that younger members don't want to take on leadership positions, or are not invited to do so, because of their inexperience. It is like hunting for a job that requires experience when you just got out of college. It is a Catch-22 situation. You can't get a job without experience, but you can't get experience without a job.

The traditional solution has been for the VP or Director to form committees, and to find their successor from members of the committee. It sounds good, but is it based on what really happens? I have been in state leadership for many years, and seldom have I seen

committees formed unless required. Another possibility is to make leadership positions a two-person job, with overlapping terms of office. This has worked quite well for our Program Vice Presidents at the state level. The work is less onerous because it is shared by two people. One of the VPs has experience from the previous year, the other is learning the job on the job. True, you now have to find a new VP each year, but your field of willing candidates is larger because you can ask "newbies" to serve.

We have had Co-Presidents for the past three years, and it seems to work well. Unfortunately, the terms of office have not overlapped because, while our current Bylaws allow for co-leadership, they do not facilitate overlapping terms. We are required in the Bylaws to elect leaders on either even or odd years. The language to allow the present system to exist with a new system with co-leaders serving overlapping terms is very difficult to craft! But if we want to continue in the future, we cannot rely on the methods that only worked in the past. Fortunately, our Bylaws committee is dedicated to the success of AAUW Iowa, and I am confident they will find a way to make our Bylaws and Policies relate to the real world we live in now and not rely on what only worked in the past. These Bylaws and Policies can then be used as a template by the Branches interested in changing their leadership selection process.

Join Us in April for the Spring Conference in Cedar Falls

Linda Morgan, AAUW Iowa Program Co-Vice President

Join us at the Spring Conference while the Cedar Falls-Waterloo Branch celebrates its 100th year. Other branches will also have opportunities to shine.

Date: Saturday, April 26

Location: Diamond Event Center 5307 Caraway Lane, Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613

Time: 8 am – 8:45 for registration to 5 pm final departures

Registration: \$30 includes continental breakfast, snacks, and lunch.

Speakers and program:

Steven Corbin: a well known figure in the Cedar Valley and local news media for his examination of Project 2025 and its effect on American culture, economics and democracy.

Sheritta Stokes: Co-Director, 1619 Freedom School Waterloo, Iowa. Sheritta is the school's co-director and curriculum coordinator. She is a veteran teacher with the Waterloo Community School District, with more than 20 years of teaching experience with a diverse range of students and grades. She will bring us an update on the school's progress.

Shelby Davis: Front of House Cedar Falls Community Theater employee, local actor and director of community theater entertainment.

Round table: A round table forum will be an opportunity to discuss what we can do to keep our AAUW priorities in focus during this current political and cultural climate.

Fundraising focus will be on celebrating the 100th birthday of Cedar Falls Waterloo Branch and on every Iowa branch and their years with AAUW. Individual and Branch donations to AAUW fund should reflect denominations of 100 or their branch birthday years.

Special Celebration: Birthday cake provided by Cedar Falls-Waterloo Branch

Task Force Displays: Human Trafficking, Periods with Dignity, Stronger Together

For overnight stays: A list of hotels will be included later in case attendees want to stay overnight.



Cedar Rapids Holiday Brunch

The Cedar Rapids AAUW Branch met for its annual Holiday Brunch at the Czech Museum on Saturday, January 4. We had a delightful meal and shared poignant stories of what makes our members such fascinating women. The twenty-four members in attendance share a rich tradition with AAUW and one another. The brunch closed with the singing of "Silent Night."



Want to Contact Iowa Lawmakers or Find Bills?

How to Engage in the Legislative Process

Marissa Payne, Des Moines Register

[Used with permission. Find the article using this link.](#)

Here's how to connect with Iowa lawmakers and participate in the legislative process by phone, email or in person at the state Capitol.

How do I find the Iowa lawmakers who represent me?

You can use the Find Your Legislator tool on the Iowa Legislature's website, legis.iowa.gov. to identify your state representatives: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislators/find>.

There you will have options to click an interactive map to specify your location, or use the given tabs search for your representatives by address, city, county, ZIP code or school district.

Where can I find my lawmakers' email address?

All lawmakers' legislative emails are available on the Legislature's website by clicking the Legislators tab, then the Standard Reports link and finally by clicking the List of All Legislators link: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislators/informationOnLegislators/allLegislators>.

Be sure to use your personal email to contact lawmakers, unless you're contacting them as part of your job.

How can I reach Iowa lawmakers by phone?

Call the Senate switchboard at (515) 281-3371. Ask to be connected to your state senator or request to leave a message.

Call the House switchboard at (515) 281-3221. Ask to be connected to your state representative or request to leave a message.

When you call and are connected, share your name and which city you live in. Let the lawmaker know what action you'd like them to take, such as voting for or against a specific bill.

How can I send mail to Iowa lawmakers?

Here's how you address letters to lawmakers: The Honorable (insert name), Iowa (Senate/House of Representatives), Iowa State Capitol, 1007 E. Grand Avenue, Des Moines, IA 50319.

How should I contact the governor's office?

To speak with a staff member, call the Iowa Governor's Office at (515) 281-5211.

You may fill out a form to register an opinion on an issue by visiting [https://governor.iowa.gov/contact-office-](https://governor.iowa.gov/contact-office-governor/share-your-opinion)

[governor/share-your-opinion](https://governor.iowa.gov/contact-office-governor/share-your-opinion). A Constituent Services staff member will ensure your opinion is registered.

Similarly, you may fill out a form to seek assistance at: <https://governor.iowa.gov/contact-office-governor/request-assistance>.

You may also write a letter and mail it to: Office of the Governor, Iowa State Capitol, 1007 E. Grand Avenue, Des Moines, IA 50319.

Where can I track Iowa legislation?

The "Legislation" tab on the Legislature's website, <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation>. Contains a number of tools to help you track bills.

See which bills have been introduced each day using the "daily legislation" tab.

You also may search bills by their name or a keyword using the "bills" search bar.

How can I participate in legislative committee meetings?

Find subcommittee and committee meetings on the Legislature's website under the "Committees and Schedules" tab. There, you'll see links to each Senate and House committee's webpage. Bills are considered here first before they advance to the full chamber, if passed by a majority of a committee.

Clicking a committee's page will display which lawmakers serve on the panel and show bills that are in that committee. You also can view the committee's meeting schedule, agendas and minutes documenting past meetings.

Need help finding a committee room? A map is available here: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/Resources/LegislativeCommitteeRoomMaps.pdf>.

How can I watch Senate and House floor debates on a bill?

Click the Senate/House tab of the Legislature's website. <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/chambers>. This is where you can stream audio or video of a chamber's live proceedings.

You also may select the debate eligibility calendar to view which bills members of the House or Senate could discuss and vote on during a given day

There also is a weekly calendar for each chamber available here, but it's subject to change over the course of the week.

Mayors Issue Proclamation about Human Trafficking Awareness Month

Proclamations have been signed by City Mayors in recognition of January, Human Trafficking and Slavery Awareness Month. AAUW Iowa branch members and the Iowa Network on Human Trafficking (NAHT) and Slavery have been instrumental in asking for these proclamations.

As of this date, there have been proclamations by the mayors of Des Moines, West Des Moines, Algona, and Waverly, and we expect more cities. See more pictures on the next page.



West Des Moines: Mayor Russ Trimble and AAUW member Mary Ann Ahrens with proclamation, and city council members. .



Des Moines: Mayor Connie Boesen (with proclamation), and representatives of AAUW, Iowa Network on Human Trafficking and Slavery, Rotary, and Chains Interrupted.

You Can Help!

Approve \$1 Million Set Aside for the Attorney General's Office for Human Trafficking Victim Assistance

Mary Ann Ahrens, Maxine Lampe and Elle Sweborg, HT Task Force

The Iowa Legislature recently gaveled in for the 2025 Session. It is time once again to contact our legislators to support this and other issues that are public policy priorities.

WHAT: Attorney General Brenna Bird set aside \$1million dollars from the AG's budget to be used for human trafficking and slavery victim assistance.

WHY: Currently the Iowa Government covers victim funding for other types of crimes but not specifically for victims of human trafficking which is very much needed for rehabilitation services.

WHEN/WHERE: **Currently and throughout the session** in one of a variety of ways **and/or at AAUW Iowa's Lobby Day** scheduled at the Capitol on Wednesday, February 12 from 9 am – Noon in Room 305.

HOW: Find the *Des Moines Register* article "Want to Contact Iowa Lawmakers or Find Bills? How to Engage in the Legislative Process," by Marissa Payne in this newsletter. There are choices on how you can simply contact any legislator and our Iowa government offices. It sounds daunting but believe me it is not. The legislators are people like us who have concerns and information and want and **need** to hear from us!

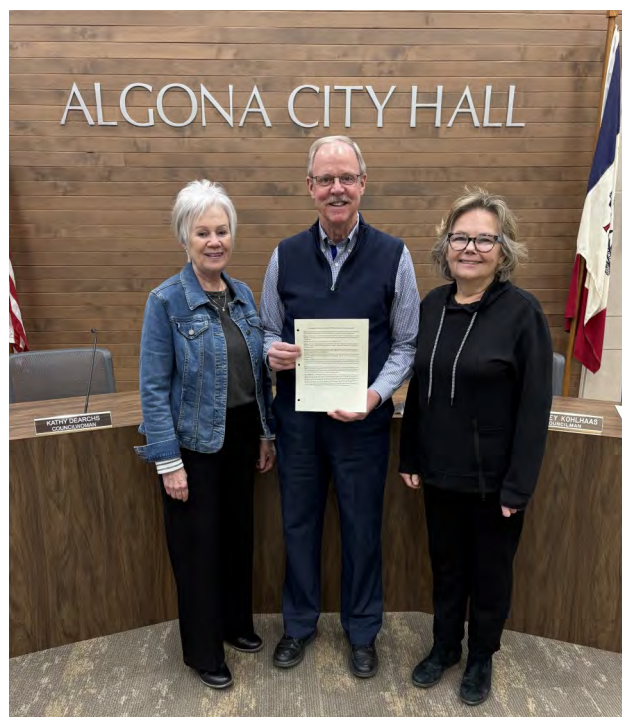
WHO: YOU and ME! Think about which ways you are comfortable in communicating. Choose one and write down a few heartfelt comments of support with any examples you may have and send it off electronically (email or text), by mail, in person, leave a message or make personal phone calls. Be sure to identify yourself, your branch and AAUW Iowa. Your concerns are important and valued and reflect the changes we need. YOU are making a difference!

REWARDS: Restoring freedom, dignity, worth, relationships, and survival for our sisters and brothers who are struggling to overcome desperation and achieve the American Dream!

LOBBY DAY! Join AAUW Iowa Public Policy Director Diane Kearns and other AAUW members on Lobby Day. Each year we gather to experience a very informative event to help us get acquainted with each other, and reinforce our skills and public policy beliefs to create a more equitable and stronger Iowa together. If there was ever a time to use our educated voices, it is NOW! Lobby Day will focus on our public policy issues near and dear to us and we will hear from a few legislators.



Waverly: AAUW members Sara Petersen, Jami Dare, Meredith Keelan, Jenn Wolff, and Kim Folkers were present for the proclamation.



Algona: Maor Rick Murphy with AAUW members Nettie Renshaw and Janet Brandt.



Come to Lobby Day February 12

Iowa State Capitol Room 305

9:00 am—12:00 pm

Get to Know the eNetwork Branch



The AAUW e-Network Online Branch meets via Zoom the second Wednesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. Their January meeting featured a presentation by three members discussing Anita Hill's 2021 book, *Believing: Our Thirty-Year Journey to End Gender Violence*.

Programs for the remainder of the year include a discussion of key issues in Iowa education for February; strategies to move AAUW goals forward post-election; our history of women in STEM; and Love for Read. We wrap up each year in June with sharing members' book recommendations for great summer reads and election of officers. Individuals interested in membership may reach out to our Membership Chair at lampe.maxine@gmail.com.

AAUW Denounces District Court's Decision to Vacate 2024 Title IX Rules

January 9, 2025

Decision makes it easier for schools to dismiss cases; harder to hold perpetrators of sexual harassment and assault accountable; more difficult for survivors to get the protections they need.

WASHINGTON — AAUW (American Association for University Women) today denounced the decision by the U.S. District Court in the Eastern District of Kentucky to vacate the updated Title IX rules released in April 2024. The decision makes it easier for schools to dismiss cases, harder to hold perpetrators of sexual harassment and assault accountable, and more difficult for survivors to get the protections they need.

"This ruling is a direct attack on students nationwide," said AAUW CEO Gloria L. Blackwell. "The U.S. District Court has just made it harder for America's most vulnerable students to report their harassment and seek protection."

The 2024 Title IX rules increased protection for student survivors of sexual harassment and assault and ensured equal education opportunities for pregnant, parenting, and LGBTQ+ students. The court's decision reverts Title IX back to rules instituted by former Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos, which fail to respond to the reality of sexual harassment and violence in schools.

Title IX, part of the Education Amendments of 1972, empowers students with the right to report misconduct, seek justice, and access resources to continue their

education without fear or disruption. Upholding Title IX ensures campuses remain spaces where equity and respect are cornerstones of the academic and social experience.

"Students deserve to be in inclusive, welcoming learning environments — not to be political pawns," said Blackwell. "AAUW is prepared to fight on behalf of all students, who deserve protection regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, race or ethnicity, and parenting status."



Periods with Dignity

Maureen White, Periods with Dignity Task Force Chair

You may recall reading "You Matter. Period," an article by Marti Anderson, in the August 2024 *Iowa Initiative* newsletter. Marti wrote about a new task force created by the AAUW Iowa Board of Directors to address the issue of period poverty in our Iowa public schools. She referenced the American Medical Women's Association definition of "Period Poverty" as "inadequate access to menstrual hygiene tools and education, including but not limited to sanitary products, washing facilities, and waste management."

This fall the new task force was renamed **Periods With Dignity**, with Marti as the chair. Unfortunately, she recently had to step down from that position and I was named the new chair.

We've asked branch presidents to recommend members who are willing to work on the task force or we welcome individual volunteers. It would be especially helpful to have at least some volunteers from areas of the state primarily represented by Republicans in the Legislature since they are the gate-keepers on legislation, but we can use any interested person.

Task force members will meet via Zoom and communicate primarily with email. To start, we'll focus on these two areas:

1. Legislation that requires public school districts to provide period products in bathrooms and requires the state to allocate money to the districts to pay for the products. It often takes multiple attempts to pass bills; this may be a multi-year goal. We need to start advocating for this now. We will find allies in working on this issue.
2. Educating ourselves, our members, and others about the difficulty too many girls and families face in acquiring (e.g. transportation issues) and paying for period products. Branches may want to discuss starting projects to help provide products in their public schools, depending on local need.

Our Cedar Falls-Waterloo branch started the Gotcha Covered. Period. Community Action Project about five years ago to address the problems faced by some students who don't have access to adequate period products. This basic health / hygiene issue can keep girls from attending school, classes, or extra-curricular activities, making it an issue of equal access to education as well. Our fundraising pays for the products we provide, which is not enough to meet the entire need of the students, but it helps. We're only helping girls in two school districts out of over

300. *Every girl across the state should have equitable access to these hygiene products in bathrooms, same as toilet paper, soap, or paper towels, regardless of income.*

We've gathered information about period poverty, what other states are doing, etc. so that is material that can be shared with task force members. We can also provide advice for interested branches about how to go about starting a project. In other words, the task force and branch members don't have to reinvent the wheel, mostly just educate themselves if they're unfamiliar with the issue.

Not sure if this is an issue in your area? Or in most of Iowa? You may be surprised. Income is a major factor, often forcing families to choose between food and menstrual supplies. Eligibility for free or reduced breakfast or lunch is based on federal income guidelines or whether the family receives food assistance (e.g. SNAP, FIP). Also, students may be eligible if they are homelessness, runaways, a foster, or a migrant. It's not surprising then that eligible students are often the same ones who lack access to period products.

Find your school district on this [map](#) to examine the percentage of students that qualify for free and reduced breakfast and/or lunches. On that page, click on the yellow area above the map "Click Here for District Specific and Historic Data" to get even more information.

If you agree this is a problem worthy of our attention and advocacy, then consider how you can help.

Periods with Dignity Des Moines Branch Invites You to a Virtual Program February 25 at 7:00 pm

The Des Moines branch will host a program on Periods with Dignity on Tuesday, February 25, at 7:00 pm using zoom. Our speaker is Maureen White, chair of the AAUW Iowa Periods with Dignity Task Force. Learn about the extent of this issue, how it affects girls' educations, and how you can help.

Join Zoom Meeting:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2017201809?
pwd=WXcyREhjcjI0ZlNQMUtmZjIjCU0RQQT09&om
n=87995054460](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2017201809?pwd=WXcyREhjcjI0ZlNQMUtmZjIjCU0RQQT09&omn=87995054460)

Algona's Community & Culture Connections

Jennifer Davis, Algona and eNetwork Branches

Community & Culture Connections (CCC) is a 501(c)(3) founded by Jennifer Davis in 2023 and based in Algona, Iowa. The organization works in conjunction with community organizations, churches, schools, and businesses to address immigrant challenges and build on successes toward increased inclusion and integration of new residents in our community and county.

Algona has a growing number of primarily Spanish-speaking immigrant residents with the majority coming from Cuba; coming from a Totalitarian Communist state, these residents are somewhat fearful of and inhibited in their ability to interact with and be involved in the community. Our new residents are faced with the challenges of adjusting to a new culture and language, complicated by a lack of information and accessible resources. Likewise, due to the language barrier, many local residents are reticent to interact, creating an even more difficult barrier to immigrant adaptation and community acceptance. There are very few bilingual residents to interpret, translate and to serve this population. CCC strives to increase dialogue and communication, collaboration, and understanding through common interests among immigrants and the community.

Upper right and lower right: Vendors (provided by CCC) at the World Food Festival, an Algona Founders Day event, in collaboration with the City of Algona and Algona Chamber of Commerce; A dozen vendors prepared food representing Mexico, Cuba, Nicaragua, Honduras, Sweden and the U.S.

Below: High Tunnel Garden Group, which planted, maintained and harvested hundreds of pounds of vegetables each week that were provided to the Kossuth County CARE Team, Senior Center, and local food pantries

CCC has received a 2025 grant from the Kossuth County Community Foundation for the establishment of the Multi-Cultural Connections Center (MCCC) in Algona. Initially, the MCCC, which will be housed in the current First Congregational United Church of Christ administrative building, will provide a community space for cultural exchange, welcoming new residents, and offer language, arts, crafts, professional and personal development workshops, seminars and events.

The MCCC will provide a safe space as an information resource and safe environment for immigrants to learn English, as well as to share and learn with the community at large through workshops in fine, visual, and language arts as well as cultural and professional and personal development workshops. The Algona community, including Spanish speaking residents, will be invited and encouraged to participate in these opportunities to build mutual trust, acceptance, and friendships.



Remembering Past AAUW Iowa President Janet Heinicke

Janet Heinicke passed away on January 12, 2025, at Edencrest in Johnston. Janet was originally from Indiana. She graduated from Wittenberg University in Springfield, Ohio, and was an art educator in Indiana and Ohio before completing a master's degree in art education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She earned a M.F.A in painting and doctoral degree in curriculum at Northern Illinois University, in DeKalb, Illinois. From 1982 to 2001, Jan worked as Chair of the Fine Arts Division at Simpson College, Indianola, Iowa. Janet was a member of the Indianola branch of AAUW for many years, and she was president of AAUW Iowa from 2006-2008. Other women who served as presidents of AAUW Iowa share memories.

Rowena Hardinger: Janet was a dear friend. I took art classes in her home. She had firm convictions on women's abilities and developed situations educationally and professionally to illustrate. We were part of the Sister State program in Stavropol, Russia, in 1990.

Sandra Keist Wilson: Receiving this message brought sadness but also wonderful memories of my years in Iowa and especially the experiences gained from being a member of IA AAUW and getting to know Janet. Janet's watercolor painting hangs in our living room and I remember her and appreciate her talent each day. As others stated she was an educator and mentor to many, including me. She was a lady of many talents that were recognized over the years. She will be missed but others that she touched are serving now and her legacy will last. Prayers for her family as they now are missing a Mother and Grandmother. These are times that I regret the too many miles between here and there.

Diane Patton: Jan was IA president preceding my term. She was always a thoughtful leader, far-sighted, encouraging, thorough, inclusive, creative, and much, much more. I appreciated her mentorship and friendship which she provided in abundance to many.

Myrna Sandvik: Like everyone else, I am deeply saddened to hear of Janet's passing. I admired her very much and treasure the time I was able to spend with her. She always had wise advice.

Margo Underwood: I'm saddened by Jan's passing as well. In addition to all Jan's attributes and skills mentioned, I remember what a great listener she was and skilled at offering another perspective on an issue that I had not considered. It enhanced my decision-making during my presidency.

Sue Jorgenson: Jan followed my term as State AAUW President and she became a dear friend. Her husband, Ray Heinicke, was a chemist and his work took him abroad. Janet became a visiting artist on trips to Europe, eastern Africa and Japan. She connected with women wherever she went. For example, she learned the craft of batik from native women in Malaysia and then taught rural women in Tanzania the art of batik and how to sell their fabrics internationally as a way to support their families.



As recently as 8 years ago my grandson, Dylan, and I spent the weekend with Janet in her home. She had a large studio with an extensive library and centers for creating art projects. Dylan and Janet bonded and Dylan became immersed in art projects. She had the ability to reach across generations to make friends and share her knowledge and skills.

Maxine Lampe: Janet was a remarkable woman, my Dear Friend and role model. Janet was a wonderful mentor and friend. I will always remember her ability to listen to everyone's viewpoints and then synthesize all those ideas into what each of us had wanted to say. Her leadership in AAUW IA was appreciated as she supported women and girls through the Legacy Circle and served as state president and on International projects. A woman of greatness has left us! RIP my friend!

Mary Ann Ahrens: When Janet was state president I chaired the dues increase issue at state convention which passed. It was the last time we had a state dues increase. Also when they planned Indianola's 100th anniversary I was invited to keynote the event. I delved into their history and brought bits into the keynote. Simpson's college president joined us. Jan was instrumental in keeping up our C/U connections.

UI Nurse Innovators Program Transforms Patient Care Solutions

Annie Smith Barkalow, Corridor Business Journal

Pediatric, skin, wound, and ostomy nurse clinician at UIHC Stead Family Children's Hospital Kayla Piplani's experience with a premature infant set her on the path to solutions with the Nurse Innovators program. An ostomy bag—an exterior pouch which collects human waste—was causing issues for the infant.

The ostomy bag needed changing every two hours, she told the audience at the Nurse Innovators pitch competition November 14. Poorly-fitted ostomy bags can cause skin irritation, pain and increased risk of infection, and the frequent handling of a fragile newborn added to the complexity of the case.

With the use of a 3D printer and medical imaging, Ms. Piplani hopes to scan a patient's abdominal contours and create a customized wafer, the piece of the pouching system that adheres to the skin and fits snugly around the stoma, preventing leakage.

Frequent wafer changes can be “a source of infection for these patient. It keeps them here much longer,” she said.

“Changing a pouch every two hours is expensive, and insurance only covers so many bags a month, so let's say (patients are) at home and they're having trouble, then they're going through their supply much faster. So let's get them something that works,” she said.

Her idea, StomaCoach, ultimately won third place and \$10,000 at the pitch competition.

“Really from the beginning of our profession, nurses have been innovators, and I think COVID-19 really brought out this critical role of nurses and innovation,” said clinical researcher and intrapreneur Abby Hess, a nurse practitioner at Cincinnati Children's Hospital and a keynote speaker at the pitch competition.

“It brought that to the forefront, because we had so many challenges we had to fix quickly, and so I think it really helped accelerate sort of everything. A lot of nurses have been working to grow our role in innovation. COVID-19, even though there were so many challenges, it also really helped to bring to the forefront this need: We can't do this without nurses. And really our ideas from the bedside and these workarounds that we see all the time, these are the important first steps to recognizing what the opportunities for innovation can be when we look at our profession,” she continued.

Kayla Piplani is a member of the Cedar Rapids Area branch of AAUW. The article is used with permission.



Kayla Piplani, a member of the Cedar Rapids Area Branch of AAUW, speaks at the Iowa Nurse Innovators Pitch Competition.

President Biden Says the ERA is Law

President Joe Biden announced a major opinion on January 17 that the Equal Rights Amendment is ratified, enshrining its protections into the Constitution, a last-minute move that some believe could pave the way to bolstering reproductive rights. There are certain to be legal challenges.

