



IOWA INITIATIVE

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You Can Still Register For the Spring Conference

Saturday, April 26, 2025

[Register Online here](#)

Or print and complete the form
on the last page and send with check.

Act fast—April 9 deadline!

See you in Cedar Falls!

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Co-President’s Letter

Pat Higby, AAUW Iowa Co-President

Have you registered for the Spring Conference in Cedar Falls yet? It will be a wonderful opportunity to meet old friends and make some new ones while you enjoy some great presentations!

Next, some good news! Tim Glaza from Public School Strong, one of our Stronger Together partners, reports 467 signatures were collected from 78 of Iowa’s 325 school districts. If you haven’t signed the petition to request fully funding public schools and a phase out of private vouchers, please do so. If you can print off the petition and get more signatures that would be great, too!



Now for the bad news. Representative Miller-Meeks recently reassured constituents that **traditional** Medicaid would not be impacted by the proposed budget cuts. But to get at least \$880 billion in budget cuts over the next 10 years without touching Social Security or Medicare, Medicaid is the only place those savings exist. Traditional Medicaid is the “old” Medicaid program, it does not include the Medicaid Expansion that resulted from the American Care Act (ACA, also known as Obama Care). 40 of the 50 states adopted Medicaid Expansion because

states pay just 10% of the total coverage cost. Without federal assistance states would need to pay 100% of the costs. Is that likely to happen? Who would be affected?

According to healthinsurance.org, “Pre-ACA, Medicaid was generally never available to non-disabled adults under age 65 unless they had minor children. And even then, the income caps to qualify as a parent/caretaker were very low. By expanding Medicaid, the ACA created a viable pathway to coverage for millions of low-income adults.” Included in those millions of people are 39% of all pregnant women in Iowa whose birth costs are covered by Medicaid.

What happens when low-income people are not covered by insurance is clear from pre ACA data. Instead of controlling or preventing their conditions, people wait until the problem sends them to the local hospital emergency room. Without insurance these hospitals are not reimbursed for treatment. Allison Orris, the director of Medicaid policy at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities predicts this could lead to hospitals closing.

Why are these cuts proposed? Because the current administration wants to continue tax cuts. Will those tax cuts help you? Not if you lose your health insurance! Please contact your Senators and Representatives about this important legislation that will negatively impact women and children.

Lobby Day at the Capitol

Diane Kearns, AAUW Iowa Public Policy Director

Our Lobby Day was held in Des Moines, Tuesday, March 18. There were approximately 30 in attendance. Representatives of the League of Women Voters, American Civil Liberties Union and the Iowa Federation of Labor were invited to participate. We began with a moment of silence in memory of Elaine Kresse, who served on the AAUW Iowa board for many years, both as the college/university director and as membership vice president. The focus of the day included discussion of the various bills which are passing through the legislature relating to AAUW Public Policy Priorities.

Invitations were sent to the House and Senate members. Representative Dave Jacoby and Representative Amy Neilsen addressed the group regarding bills which will be on the agenda for debate. The House was going into debate and several attendees observed the debate which included bills from the Higher Education Committee regarding Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. One of the bills is HF856 which would prohibit public and private educational institutions from engaging in certain activities related to DEI. Another bill HF269 would prohibit certain requirements for students and faculty at regent's institutions related to diversity, equity and inclusion. Representative Jacoby indicated there were four or five other bills related to that particular issue on the debate calendar. Representative Jacoby also stated there is a push to have the Board of Regents elected rather than appointed. Currently they are appointed by the Governor.

Other issues discussed by the group included promoting a strong system of public education, self-determination of one's reproductive health, vigorous enforcement of laws against human trafficking and support for the victims of human trafficking. It was also Equal Pay Day. The group

had a display in the rotunda and handed out Payday candy bars and information regarding equal pay. In 2023 women working full-time earned just 83% of what men earned. The minimum wage in Iowa is \$7.25. The first funnel for legislation was March 7. This means that bills that do not have a committee meeting are dead for the session, however, they can be resurrected, so to speak, and be attached to other bills.

The legislature is in session until May 2 and the second funnel is April 4. AAUW recommends attending legislative forums in your area and asking questions of the legislators regarding bills of interest. The legislative website is easy to maneuver to find the status of legislation (www.legis.iowa.gov) and how your elected senators and representatives vote. It was a full day and thank you to the Holly Oppelt, League of Women Voters, Becca Chyma, American Civil Liberties Union and Pete Hird, Secretary-Treasurer from the Iowa Federation of Labor representatives for attending.



Representative David Jacoby



Representative Amy Nielsen



Lobby Day Attendees

Help Our Iowa Libraries!

Jeaneal Weeks, Cedar Rapids Branch

Iowa Public Libraries are under attack and stand to lose **\$2,489,580** in state funding!

Book challenges and public library constraints are on the rise across the nation. Important titles are pulled from shelves, librarians are unjustly maligned, and vulnerable community members are left without the resources they need and deserve.

Two alarming bills have already passed initial legislative hurdles in Iowa:

House File 880: Punishes libraries that maintain membership in their professional organizations, the American Library Association and the Iowa Library Association, by stripping state funding—devastating for already budget-constrained institutions in small communities.

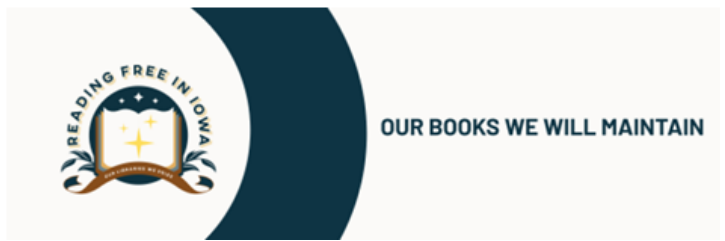
HF 880 would prohibit public libraries – on pain of losing Enrich Iowa funding – from being dues-paying members of the American Library Association, the Iowa Library Association, and other professional organizations.

The loss of Enrich Iowa funds would severely impact library services across the state. Reimbursements provided through Enrich Iowa's Open Access and Interlibrary Loan programs promote efficient collection and use of materials across Iowa's libraries. Enrich Iowa's Direct State Aid program strengthens local libraries and reduces disparities. If HF 880 passes, libraries will be forced to forgo these essential state funds or lose the benefits of association membership (including access to grant funding for library improvements). Both options inhibit quality service to Iowans.

House File 521: Removes crucial obscenity exemptions from educational materials in public libraries and schools, directly attacking every Iowan's right to access information and make independent choices.

HF 521 would strip vital protections from Iowa libraries and schools, threatening free inquiry, intellectual freedom, and First Amendment rights.

HF 521 seeks to remove exemptions in Iowa Code Ch. 728, exposing libraries, schools, and educators to unnecessary legal and financial risks. These institutions operate under well-established obscenity laws, which already ensure that materials lacking educational or cultural value are not protected. This bill would create a chilling effect, leading to self-censorship and restricting every Iowan's right to access information and make their own choices, free from the influence of others.



Take action today!

Reading Free In Iowa is an Iowa-based advocacy group dedicated to safeguarding public libraries and the critical services they provide to our communities. Join us in our fight against censorship, book bans, and information restriction. Together, we can preserve libraries as strongholds of freedom and knowledge.

- [Fill out this form](#) to join our ranks and find out how you can help.
- Share this message with family members, friends, and neighbors who stand against censorship—our grassroots network grows with each connection.
- Stay tuned for information and training opportunities.

Questions? Email readingfreeiniowa@gmail.com.

Register Now for the AAUW Iowa Spring Conference!

You are not too late. The AAUW Iowa Spring Conference will be at the Diamond Center on Cedar Falls on April 26, 2025. Registration and a continental breakfast of fruit, Danish pastries, and beverages will be available from 8 until mid-morning. Morning speakers include Steve Corbin and Susan Langan. Afternoon speakers include Sarah Corkery, Shelby Davis, and Sheritta Stokes. We will elect new officers at our annual meeting, award achievements, and celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Cedar Falls-Waterloo branch. [You may register online using this link](#), or print the registration form on the last page of this newsletter, and send with check to AAUW Iowa treasurer Dev Kiedaisch.



African-American Reading Event in Waterloo

From a Waterloo Courier article by Maria Kuiper

Portions of news coverage by Waterloo Courier reporter Maria Kuiper and photographer Chris Zoeller appear below, and are used with permission.

An African American Read-In was held on March 15, with three award-winning children's book authors holding storytime to a crowd of over 1,000 in West High School's auditorium. The event comes as a response to the Waterloo Community School District withdrawing from a similar event hosted annually by the University of Northern Iowa.

District officials stated they pulled out due to fears of losing federal funding by not following mandates requiring public schools to strip their diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives.

The Read-in was planned by Nikole Hannah-Jones, Waterloo native and Pulitzer Prize winning author of the 1619 Project. Hannah-Jones, the 1619 Freedom School – an after-school literacy program – and a dozen organizations funded the read-in to get bestselling authors from across the U.S. to fly into Waterloo, while also donating more than 3,000 books.

Children's authors Tami Charles, Derrick Barnes, and Jacqueline Woodson read selections from their materials. Students of the 1619 Freedom School also performed a reader's theater of *Born on the Water*– Hannah-Jones' children's book. All of the speakers emphasized Black stories need to be told, because "Black history is American history." Each book read had messages of inclusivity and validation of thoughts and realizations made by non-white

children. However, Charles said these books are for all children to teach them empathy.

With the crowd made up of those from the Cedar Valley, across Iowa and even a few outside of the state, Waterloo Mayor Quentin Hart said he is proud to show what the city has to offer through the people that make up the child-raising village. But the moment is bittersweet.

"I would never believe in my 53 years, I couldn't believe that we would have an Iowa State Legislature, senators and federal representatives that want to impede Black children, brown children, white children from learning about the significant contributions of Blacks in history," Hart said.

"Reading Black literature doesn't divide us," he continued. "If you take a look at everyone in this crowd today, it's a testament that it unites us."



Students of the 1619 Freedom School present a reader's theater of 'Born on the Water' by Nikole Hannah-Jones at an African American Read-In event on Saturday. Photo by Maria Kuiper



Author and event organizer Nikole Hannah-Jones greets guests during the African American Read-In. Photo by Chris Zoeller



Children's author Tami Charles reads her book All Because You Matter. Photo by Maria Kuiper

Harm Reduction Vending Machine Announcement

Allison Smith, Executive Director, Family Planning Council of Iowa

We are thrilled to announce we are launching a harm reduction vending machine with our partners at the Polk County Health Department! This temperature-controlled machine will be placed outside of the Polk County Health Department where it will be accessible 24/7 to members of the community. The machine will be FREE to everyone and include:

- Plan B
- [Opill](#) (1 month and 3 month packs)
- Naloxone
- Condoms (internal, external, and latex-free)
- Dental Dams (latex and latex-free)
- Personal Lubricant
- Sharps Disposal Containers
- Hygiene Kits
- Guns Locks

We expect the vending machine to be operational by mid-April, and will update you when it is up and running. Additionally, we are putting together fliers, postcards, and other informational materials to distribute to organizations to help inform the public of the vending machine. We would appreciate your help in raising awareness, and will make sure to pass along these materials as soon as they have been finalized.

We'd like to thank the Polk County Health Department for



their partnership, as well as Polk County Veteran Affairs, My Iowa Condoms, Opill, and Plan B for their generous donations that helped make this initiative possible.

We are honored to be able to provide this resource and look forward to the positive impact it will have on the Des Moines community.



Stronger Together

In December of 2024 a group of AAUW Iowa members started contacting organizations who are working for human rights. It doesn't matter whether one is working for the rights of women, people of color, LGBTQ+ people, immigrants, Native Americans, those who are differently abled, or the earth. We are all humans who deserve dignity, respect, and access to basic needs. It is important that we recognize this commonality and work together.

In the past year AAUW Iowa members helped purchase yard signs in support of Iowans for Gun Safety Coalition, collected signatures for an ACLU petition for Reproductive Freedom, and contributed to and helped distribute Reproductive Kits of the Family Planning Council of Iowa.

Stronger Together is about working together, supporting each other in fund raisers and actions, and sharing information. The list of members that follows has agreed to do this. With one email, all organizations on the list will be notified of important information to be shared with all

the organizations, and those organizations can pass it on to their members, reaching many more than before.

So far this year AAUW Iowa has worked with the Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement's (Iowa CCI) Public School Strong to support their work to strengthen public schools. We also invited the Stronger Together members to join our lobby day in Des Moines which increased our numbers and impact.

[The current list of Stronger Together organizations can be found here.](#) We thank the organizations that are on the list. If you have a connection with another organization and would like them added, please email Ann Gale at aauw.iowa1@gmail.com.

For those who are on the list of organizations, to send notice of an event or information about your organization to the entire list of organization contacts, also send to Ann Gale at aauw.iowa1@gmail.com.

Equal Pay Day at the Capitol—a Sweet Event!

Mary Ann Ahrens, Event Chair

How sweet it was passing out Pay Day candy bars and pay equity information with the League of Women Voters in the Rotunda during our Equal Pay Day Event as a reminder of the inequities that continue to exist between what women earn compared to what men earn. In 2024 the pay gap was 84 cents. By the end of 2024, the wage gap increased by one cent and is currently 83 cents for women compared to a dollar that men make. **Will pay equity ever become a reality?** Invitations were placed on the desks of all Iowa legislators inviting them to join us. Attached was *“Iowa’s Stalled Minimum Wage – A Grim Picture for Women and Families in 2025”* fact sheet. This resource, along with *“America’s Women and the Wage Gap Fact Sheet -February 2025”* is on AAUW’s Website and yields updated information that is troubling. Do not hesitate to check out the information and consider writing a letter to the editor or an op ed piece in your area. This year’s National Equal Pay Day is March 25.

Keep in mind that it has been 15 years since Iowa raised the minimum wage which is unconscionable! Iowa’s minimum wage is still at \$7.25 per hour or an annual total of \$15,080 which matches the Federal minimum wage. All the states surrounding Iowa have raised their minimum wage. In 2025-- 21 states are raising their minimum wage. The Iowa Legislature has the power to raise the minimum wage but continues not to address the issue. The Center for Economic and Policy Research found that had wages kept up with productivity as they had before 1968, the minimum wage would be at \$21.50 an hour. **This is not a partisan issue. It is an issue of survival, respect, and dignity for one another!**

The number of Iowans living under the poverty line is approximately 366,288 or 11.3% of Iowa’s total population. In Iowa, the number of children (under the age of 18) living in poverty is 12.3% or 45 ,053 (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey). It is no wonder that families are struggling with hunger, illness, appropriate dress, school/work tardiness, no transportation, few possessions, being home alone, depression, no babysitter, shared living space, and multiple families living together.

How long and how many more Iowans must struggle in poverty before the Iowa Legislature takes ACTION to increase the minimum wage?

The necessity of Equal Pay Day is a stark reminder to our Iowa Legislators of what is at stake! Iowans claim that we have the “Freedom to Flourish.” If so, for whom?

Below is a picture of AAUW and League of Women Voters members in the Rotunda. It was great visibility for us with two television stations doing interviews not only for Equal Pay Day but for Lobby Day which was in the morning. We thank Progress Iowa and members of AAUW Iowa and League of Women Voters for their much-appreciated assistance.



AAUW members at the Equal Pay Day event in the rotunda



Senator Molly Donahue with AAUW members in the rotunda



Stronger Together—AAUW Iowa Spring Conference

April 26, 2025

Western Communities Diamond Event Center

5307 Caraway Lane, Cedar Falls, IA 50613

- 8:00-9:00 Registration
- 8:00-9:30 Continental Breakfast: Fruit bowl, Danish pastries, beverages
- 9:00 WELCOME: AAUW of Iowa Co-Presidents Kim Folkers and Pat Higby
Annual Meeting and introduction of board members
- 9:50 Break
- 10:00 Steve Corbin: Project 2025 and Where We are Now
Emeritus Professor of Marketing at University of Northern Iowa and freelance writer
- 10:45 Q&A with Steve Corbin
- 11:00 Susan Langan: Difficult Conversations
Round table discussions about combating Project 2025, misinformation about education,
DEI, mental health, women’s reproductive choices, women in government, etc.
- 12:00 Lunch, continued discussion and social time
- 1:00 Sarah Corkery: Why I Ran for Political Office and What it Takes to Run
- 1:45 Q&A with Sarah Corkery
- 2:00 Shelby Davis and Friend: A Little Theater
- 2:35 Kim Folkers and Pat Higby: Recognition of 50-year members/
Celebrate 100 year Anniversary with Cedar Falls/ Other Branch Recognitions
- 3:00 Sheritta Stokes: Update on 1619 Freedom School in Waterloo
- 3:30 Q&A with Sheritta Stokes
- 4:00 Conference Wrap-Up



2025 AAUW Iowa

Spring Conference Registration Form

AAUW Iowa is looking forward to hosting the 2025 Spring Conference April 26, 2025, at the:

*Diamond Event Center
5307 Caraway Lane
Cedar Falls, IA 50613*

Staying over the night before or after the conference? There are many hotels. Here are two suggestions:

- *Country Inn and Suites by Radisson, 2910 S. Main Street, Cedar Falls, IA 50613. Phone 319-553-5001*
- *Hilton Garden Inn, 7213 Nordic Drive, Cedar Falls, IA 50613. Phone 319-553-5001*

To register for the conference, print and complete this form, and send it with a check to the address below, or [complete registration online](#). Your registration form and check must be received by April 9.

*Deverie Kiedaisch
1025 Grand Ave.
Keokuk, Iowa 52632*

Name _____

Branch _____ Phone _____

Email _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Members _____ \$30 Students and guests _____ \$25

Late registration (Received April 10-24) Members _____ \$40 Students and guests _____ \$35