



IOWA INITIATIVE

A PUBLICATION OF AAUW-IOWA

VOLUME 106 NUMBER 4

October 2025

IN THIS ISSUE:

Co-President's Letter	1
AAUW Opposes Education Compact	1
Impact of 6-Week Abortion Ban	2-3
Resources for Branches.....	3
Crisis Intervention and Advocacy Services	3
Schol Funding Lags Behind Inflation	4
Armed Conflict, Peace, and Women	5
Government Shutdown and Firings	6
Plan for the Future	6
Opportunities to Fight Human Trafficking	7
AAUW Members Say No Kings	7-9

Co-President's Letter

Kim Folkers, AAUW Iowa Co-President

There is so much going on across our country, state, and in our local communities right now! Many of you may agree with me - it's exhilarating, and sometimes more than a little exhausting keeping all the balls in the air. Things that I have found encouraging and rejuvenating in the past few weeks:

Our Iowa AAUW Board and Branch Presidents meetings – it's exciting to hear about all of the work being done state-wide by officers and branch members. Programs, rallies, forums, book studies, letter writing campaigns, fighting for equity for women, fighting against human trafficking, finding ways to be "stronger together" through collaborating with other like-minded groups, encouraging people to run for office, the list goes on and on. Probably the biggest boost for me came from last Saturday's No Kings Rallies. In Waverly 500+ people gathered in a local park to chant, share creative signs, and encourage one another. Not surprising that quite a few of our branch members were actively involved – I'm sure the same was true at other rallies around the state. AAUW and its mission has never been more relevant or important than it is today. Keep up the good work Iowa AAUW members!



Press Release: AAUW Opposes Trump's Higher-Ed Compact — Stand with Students, Not Political Litmus Tests

October 16, 2025

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The Trump Administration has invited all U.S. colleges and universities to sign a "Compact for Academic Excellence in Higher Education," which would offer preferential federal funding if institutions adopt sweeping policy changes. These changes include dismantling diversity, equity and inclusion, restricting campus governance and speech, holding tuition flat for five years, and capping international student enrollment (no more than 15% of undergraduates overall and no more than 5% from any single country). MIT and Brown University have already rejected the compact, and higher-education leaders warn it threatens academic freedom and institutional independence.

Gloria L. Blackwell, CEO of AAUW (the American Association of University Women) responds to this threat on higher education:

"This compact is a political litmus test — dismantle diversity, equity, and inclusion, muzzle campuses, and cap international enrollment. AAUW says no. Conditioning federal funds on abandoning these values, restricting campus speech, overriding institutional governance, and even limiting how many international students a campus may enroll is coercive, discriminatory, and inconsistent with the core purposes of higher education.

America's colleges should never be forced to choose between their values and their viability. We urge every institution to refuse this political litmus test and stand with students — especially women, students of color, student-parents, international scholars, and LGBTQ+ students, — whose success depends on campuses that are inclusive, evidence-driven, and free to teach and learn."

One Year Later: The Real Impact of Iowa's 6-Week Abortion Ban

Dr. Emily Boevers

Understanding the ban means understanding reproductive laws that reshape Iowa reproductive rights and limit patient autonomy.

On June 28th of last year, when the Iowa Supreme Court reversed and remanded the prior permanent injunction on a 6-week ban on pregnancy termination they utilized the rational basis test, which means the fact that this law *inflicts harm on individual rights* doesn't matter. The court held the law is constitutional **if it is rationally related to a legitimate government interest.**



And so, when the law went into effect July 29, 2024, women in Iowa were taken back in time, relegated to lesser citizens by the state, and placed squarely behind men and fetuses in their rights.

Now, only 2 of 5 clinics previously providing abortion remain open for care. Of note, this is a barrier to women, particularly low-resourced women, receiving cancer screenings, contraception, treatment for infections and a safe place to seek information, not only abortion care. Very pro-life, and especially poignant to reduce care for women that are already struggling to make ends meet.

As these clinics close, women travel further for care, spending more time and more money, gathering additional childcare resources, spending resources on lodging and missing time furthering their own careers and educations. The financial stress caused by these restrictions has caused more women to seek assistance.

In 2023, 194 women sought support from abortion funds. In 2024, that number swelled to 625.

The challenges to recruitment that medical professionals warned of – that OB/GYNs would not want to practice in a state where their license could be at risk by providing life-saving (or patient-affirming) care, remain. Iowa's position of weakness in women's healthcare persists. Burnout levels are high, and moral injury is heavy. Rural healthcare is struggling, and metro healthcare is not much different.

This law does not eliminate abortion as an act, as a need, or as a choice. It simply punishes Iowa's women for making personal health and family choices by forcing them to confront barriers, costs and arbitrary timelines. It diminishes their own lived experience and bodily expertise, to the ongoing detriment of our families and communities.

In 1846 when Iowa was admitted to the Union, and its first constitution adopted, women comprised approximately 5% of the workforce. At that time, even married women could not own property, much less make reproductive decisions.

But now, 79% of Iowan women are in the workforce, surviving and supporting their families in a state economy that is *worst in the nation*.

A recent Government Accountability Report confirmed that abortion restrictions negatively affect educational attainment, labor force and career trajectories, and where people choose to live.

Well, Chief Justice Susan Christensen, in her dissent, gave us our rallying cry. "We didn't come this far to say, 'Our work is done.'"

We know that Iowa deserves better. There are better ways to protect women; keeping women safe involves allowing them to exercise bodily autonomy, live by their own mores, and access healthcare with privacy and dignity.

Let me be clear: barriers to abortion access are barriers to equity, freedom and liberty in Iowa. They shape the way that young girls see themselves in our state society, which is in fact a society that transfers the value of women's lives to their unborn children. No family is exempt from an impossible pregnancy decision, and as an OB/GYN I've seen these go every way. Seeking adoption, seeking abortion for an unplanned pregnancy, seeking abortion for a planned but incurably ill pregnancy, and seeking emergent care for a desperately ill mother. In each of these heart wrenching situations, I can assure you our legislature, our governor, our AG and our Justices did not hold these patients' hand as they weighed the risks, benefits and alternatives to their unique medical conditions – *but I have*.

Whether a young woman struggling with infertility who is deciding whether to freeze embryos in Iowa or a neighboring state; a pregnant teenager who has been shunned by her boyfriend's family with little support; a young family who is struggling to remain in their rented apartment and cannot support another child; or a woman coping with the devastating news of a fetal anomaly – I have held space with these patients and seen the toll of this legislation. I have counseled Iowan fathers on where their daughters can access abortion care, conversations that demonstrate that dignified choices should be

Continued on next page

Continued from previous page

available to even those who never imagined themselves in these situations. I have wondered how to improve rural Iowan's healthcare during a moment when few physicians will choose to work here.

These restrictions undermine women's healthcare rights and diminish personal autonomy in Iowa.

Yesterday, a patient told me that her partner and father of her unborn child had 'dipped'. A choice that only a man in Iowa has when a pregnancy does not serve his best interests. Women shoulder the weight of this bill and now bear pregnancies according to the will of the government.

Our work remains vital. In no other life changing, life altering decision do we insist that a condition be specifically enumerated by a document written nearly 200 years ago.

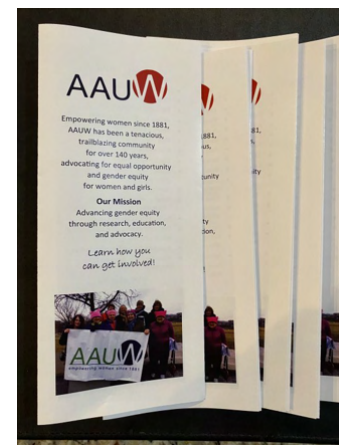
But we know what is right – patients deserve “the fundamental right to make medical decisions affecting their health and bodily integrity... free from government interference”, language our own Chief Justice gave us in her dissent. We must continue to demand it.

Dr. Emily Boevers is an obstetrician-gynecologist in Waverly, Iowa, and is affiliated with the Waverly Health Center. She is a member of the Waverly branch of AAUW.

Resources for Branches

Does your branch have a project in mind to help serve the people in your community? Find the [AAUW Iowa Special Projects Funds Application form](#), and let AAUW Iowa help you with that project.

Ann Gale developed two new resources you can use in your branches. The bookmark shown at right was developed using Canva, but Lois Enger converted it to a Word document to make it easier for you to use. Download the bookmark here: [AAUW BOOKMARKS SEPT 25](#) There is also a trifold brochure that you can print at home or take to a commercial printer. Download that brochure here: [Brochure Iowa 9.23.2025](#) The brochure was designed with a blank space on the back so that you can either write in contact information or attach a label with information about whom to contact.



Crisis Intervention and Advocacy Services



The Des Moines branch invites you to a presentation by Kaycee Barrow-Miner about crisis advocacy and intervention services on November 11 at 7pm. Her presentation will take place on zoom, and everyone is welcome to join.

Kacey Barrow-Miner is a rural Iowa native and has been a part of the anti-violence movement for fifteen years serving in various victim advocacy roles. She is currently the Training Director at Crisis Intervention & Advocacy Center in Adel. Kacey is a state certified advocate, supervisor and leader at the private non profit. Kacey holds a master's degree and a background in literature. Kacey

graduated as a first generation college student from Grand View University in 2009.

Kacey will be discussing the work Crisis Intervention & Advocacy Center does and some of the dynamics of violence she has witnessed in Iowa communities. As an agency that provides free, voluntary and confidential services, Kacey is passionate about speaking with any group, anytime, about the realities of gender based violence.

Use the link below to join for Kaycee's presentation.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2017201809?pwd=WXCyREhjcllOZlNQMUtmZjlCU0RQQT09&omn=84970025765>

Funding for Iowa Public Schools Again Falls Further Behind Inflation

Senator Herman Quirmbach, Iowa SD

When the costs of supporting your family rise faster than your income, painful cuts have to be made that will lower your family's standard of living. So it is, too, for our public schools. Compared to when she became governor, under Republican Kim Reynolds state support for public schools has fallen far behind inflation. At the same time huge numbers of taxpayers' dollars have been siphoned off to pay for private school vouchers.

This year the gap is worse than ever. State Senator Herman Quirmbach stated, "Under Gov. Reynolds, annual state funding for public K-12 schools has now fallen more than half a billion dollars behind inflation." Quirmbach added, "Public dollars should go to public schools. Instead, Reynolds' private school voucher program this year will eat up \$340 million of your tax dollars, even as the public school funding shortfall grows to \$526 million, as the attached graphs show."

"The graphs also show the shortfall is now more than \$1000 per student for regular program kids," Quirmbach stated. "The situation is even worse for students receiving special education. Funding for the kids who need the most help has fallen as much as \$3500 behind inflation compared to nine years ago. At the same time, voucher recipients get \$8000 per student, 85% of the people who get vouchers already can afford private schooling, and the private schools that benefit from vouchers don't have to accept students with disabilities."

Iowans used to be proud that our public schools were among the best in the country. Nowadays [U.S. News and World Report](#) ranks Iowa's pre-K to 12 schools only #27. Many schools can no longer offer competitive pay to attract and retain top quality teachers, and some teaching vacancies aren't being filled at all. Educational materials and facilities are in danger of becoming out of date. The attached graphs tell a sad story.

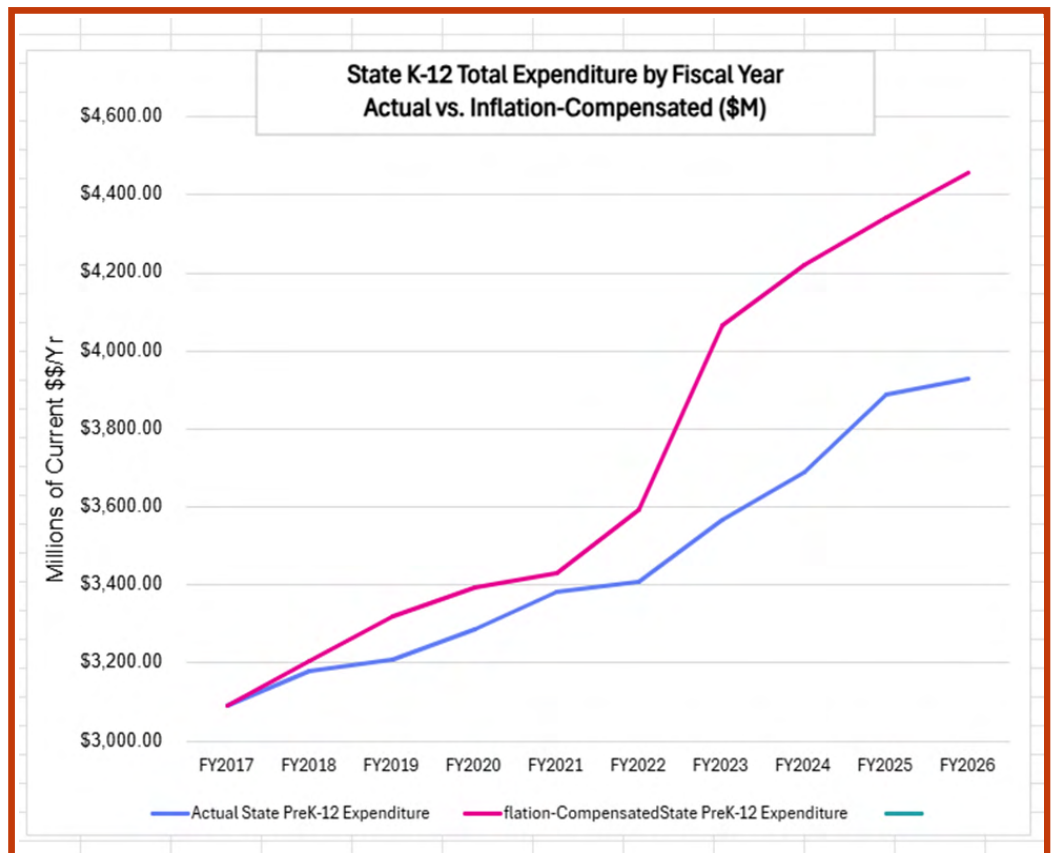
We owe Iowa children better.

Since Reynolds Became Governor

K-12 Funding:

- Iowa K-12 is down \$526 million per year for 2025-26 vs. 2016-17 in inflation-adjusted dollars.
- That's \$1048 cut per kid this year alone for regular program kids.
- Up to \$3537 has been lost per kid this year for special needs kids.
- 11.4% more per kid would be needed for FY26 to offset inflation since FY17.
- Reynolds' total shortfall over the eight years is nearly \$2.7 billion.
- A regular-program kid in ninth grade this year has had his/her education shorted \$4951 since starting first grade.

Sen. Quirmbach, Ph.D., is the Ranking Member of the Senate Education Committee. He was an economics professor at Iowa State for 29 years.



Armed Conflict, Peace and Women

Kathleen Wood Laurila, International Relations Director

In the beginning of the United States, people from other countries (mostly European), came to Iowa. Some of us are old enough to remember listening to great-grandmothers tell us of those days of toil and hope. However, much has changed when the U.S. was in many ways a self-sufficient country until the industrial revolution of the 19th C., the wars of the 20th C. and population displacement of the 21st C. caused the established way of life to change to largely one of urbanization, specialization and stress with the realization of the horrors of armed conflict taking place near and far.

We are beginning to understand that if we are to retain our hold on this experiment in a democratic republic - where the citizens are at the top of the governing pyramid - we must acknowledge the interconnections throughout the world, regardless of our day to day lives in Iowa, because it's all connected.

A major scourge of pain today is that of the increase in armed conflict, and the recognition that wars are harming civilians 10-15 times greater than that of the combatants, and importantly, conflict impacts women differently than that of men. An estimated 676 million women – nearly 17 percent of the global female population, doubling since 1990 - lived within 30 miles of a deadly conflict in 2024, according to a report from the [Peace Research Institute Oslo \(PRIO\)](#). The proportion of women killed in armed conflicts doubled in 2023 compared to the previous year. Sexual violence in conflict soared by 50 percent and the number of girls affected by serious violations in situations of armed conflict increased by 35 percent. Terrorist groups and criminal networks use sexual violence as a tactic to gain control over territory and lucrative natural resources. PRIO stated, “Conflict doesn’t just happen on the battlefield – it reaches into women’s homes, schools and workplaces, disrupting the very foundations of their lives” - and is associated with higher maternal mortality, greater risks of gender-based violence, and reduced access to education for girls (as demonstrated in Afghanistan).

Additionally, women negotiators currently represent only 14 percent of those at the tables designed to end armed conflicts, yet study after study indicates that the participation of civil society groups, including women’s organizations, makes a peace agreement 64% less likely to last the first five years. Additionally, higher levels of gender equality are associated with a lower possibility for conflict.

In an analysis of 1,860 peace agreements (1990-2019) only 6 percent contain at least one provision that specifically refer

to women. Likewise, women comprise only 6.5 percent of the military and 15.8 percent of the police in peacekeeping missions so that the skills of women in the fields of conflict are lost.

In 2000, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1325, referred to as Women, Peace and Security,

to both better protect women in conflicts and increase women’s role in peacemaking, yet after two decades any progress made is now unraveling.

Yet, one particular method of being more effective in protecting women and girls that has been recognized by some national governments and the United Nations. It is the use of Unarmed Civilian Protection (UCP) strategies. Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP), the largest international UCP organization, includes these *Key Principles of UCP: nonviolence, non-partisanship, independence, primacy of local actors, relationship-building and civilian immunity in violent conflict*.

Women Peace Teams (WPTs) formed by NP have been drawn from the local areas and are trained in the methods of UCP which includes safe passage, prevention, and as a vehicle to overcome prejudice and hate in countries like Sudan, Iraq, Myanmar and Philippines – and Minnesota. In South Sudan, NP is focusing on developing Community Protection Teams (CPTs), currently almost 100 teams—68 Women Protection Teams (WPTs) and 29 Youth Protection Teams (YPTs)— across South Sudan, playing an active role in preventing violence and promoting positive peace.

Despite women’s exclusion in most formal peace efforts, women play key roles in local peacebuilding. For example, women in Yemen negotiated for civilian access to water and in 2023 in Sudan, over 49 women-led organizations formed the Peace for Sudan Platform to push for an inclusive peace process.

While global military spending surpassed USD 2.7 trillion in 2024, women’s organizations in conflict zones received only 0.4 percent of aid. “These are not isolated data points, they are symptoms of a world that is choosing to invest in war instead of peace, and one that continues to exclude women from shaping solutions,” stated UN Women Director Sima Bahous.

There are other women and peace indicators to consider and I will cover those in a later issue of this Newsletter.



Press Release: AAUW: Government Shutdown and Court-Approved Civil Rights Firings Are a Devastating Betrayal of Students

October 1, 2025

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Today the federal government is shut down — and just two days earlier, a federal appeals court cleared the way for the U.S. Department of Education to fire nearly half of its civil rights enforcement staff. Together, these blows deliver an unprecedented crisis for America's students.

"This is a devastating one-two punch," said Gloria L. Blackwell, Chief Executive Officer of the American Association of University Women (AAUW). "With the government closed and the Department of Education's civil rights office gutted, students are left without the protections and services they urgently need. It is unconscionable that our leaders have chosen to abandon them at this moment."

The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) is the nation's frontline defense against discrimination — from sexual harassment and assault cases under Title IX to disability access and race discrimination. Even before this week's ruling, the Department had already begun dismissing complaints at an alarming pace. Now, with the shutdown in effect, reviews and investigations are suspended. That means real students are left in limbo. For example, a Title IX investigation opened last fall after more than a year of document collection and witness interviews, will now be frozen mid-stream until the government reopens, delaying relief and

discouraging future reports.

At the same time, the Department is sprinting to implement sweeping changes required by the so-called One Big Beautiful Bill, including eliminating Grad PLUS loans and capping graduate borrowing at levels that will price many women and students of color out of advanced degrees. Those rules are being rushed through negotiated rulemaking even as most of the Department is furloughed.

Meanwhile, the shutdown is halting financial aid processing, disrupting critical research, pausing community-based programs, and dismantling the very civil-rights protections meant to keep schools safe and fair.

"These are not isolated setbacks," Blackwell continued. "They are coordinated attacks on civil-rights protections across the entire education journey — from preschool classrooms to Ph.D. programs. Students at every stage deserve safe, equitable learning environments, and stripping away federal oversight abandons them all. AAUW refuses to stay silent while our country turns its back on them."

AAUW calls on Congress to end the shutdown immediately and to push back on the mass firings of staff tasked with civil rights enforcement. The American promise of equal opportunity in education cannot survive if the government abandons its role as guarantor of students' rights.

Plan for the Future. Protect What Matters.

Maxine Lampe, AAUW Legacy Circle Liaison

The bonds of friendship and commitment have always strengthened AAUW and its members. Together, we care passionately about achieving equity for women and girls — and we care deeply about one another.

Since 2008, Congress has recognized the third week of October as National Estate Planning Awareness Week, highlighting the importance and benefits of estate planning. While the topic can be difficult, making a plan provides peace of mind for you and your loved ones by:

- Protecting your life savings.
- Preparing for the unexpected, including illness.
- Ensuring your property is distributed according to your wishes.

This is an important reminder to review your estate plan and to share your wishes with your family.

If you would like to learn more about estate planning —



Leave a Legacy. Empower the Future

including how to leave a tax-wise legacy gift to AAUW — our Planned Giving Team is here to help. Contact us at planned-giving@aauw.org.

We also invite you to consider joining the Legacy Circle — AAUW's recognition society for individuals who include AAUW in their estate plans. Legacy Circle members appreciate that their commitment helps secure a future rooted in equity, education, and opportunity. After joining, you will receive tailored communications, invitations to special access events, and public recognition in various AAUW National publications. Maxine Lampe, your AAUW Legacy Circle Liaison (Lampe.maxine@gmail.com), is available to assist you, or visit the [AAUW Planned Giving Site](#) for details

Branch Opportunities to Fight Human Trafficking

Mary Ann Ahrens and Marielle Sweborg

Before we know it, the holidays will be here and a new year of hope, advocacy, action, and accomplishment will begin!

Speaking of 2026, January is National Human Trafficking Awareness Month. The current theme is *“Connecting the Dots – Strengthening Communities. Preventing Trafficking.”* **January 11 HT Awareness Day** symbolizes awareness, sadness, and cold-hearted traffickers, and is dedicated to raising awareness and participation to combat crime. It is also **Wear Blue Day** from the National Blue Campaign. Blue symbolizes solidarity with survivors. Many communities are sponsoring HT awareness events in creative ways. Perhaps members will have ideas to participate.

We are again reminding branches that did not participate last year to consider the HT Prevention City Proclamation Project. The Proclamation and event materials were shared with branch presidents last year by co-president Kim Folkers and are still available if you wish to take part. [Use this link](#) to view the proclamation event material. This is a great time of year to initially approach the mayor/city council to set up a January city council meeting time, if possible*, to take a Human Trafficking Prevention Month Proclamation to the City. This is part of our continuing work to help increase community awareness, learn more

about human trafficking and support critical prevention efforts within Iowa. This is a wonderful opportunity for our branches and members in each of our communities to gain both visibility and credibility on this issue. Also distribute our brochures to the audience and/or other appropriate articles on HT from *Iowa Initiative*. Contact Mary Ann Ahrens for a supply of brochures or questions.

maahrens66@gmail.com

*Feel free to choose another month for the Proclamation event that fits into your schedule.



2026 Iowa NAHT Recognition Event at State Capitol

Circle Monday, January 26, on your calendar for the Iowa Network Against Human Trafficking recognition event with the Iowa Governor and Secretary of State. Each year individuals/organizations/businesses/facilities are recognized for their work and commitment to trafficking prevention.

October 18—AAUW Members Say No Kings!

We asked for your pictures, and you did not disappoint.



Des Moines, from Marti Anderson

No Kings



From Mary Kae Hanson in Algona



From Mary Kae Hanson in Algona



From Mary Kae Hanson in Algona



From Mary Kae Hanson in Algona



From Ann Gale in Des Moines



From Ann Gale in Des Moines

No Kings



From Marilyn Deal in Algona



Diane Kearns in Keokuk



From Mary Kae Hanson in Algona



From Ann Gale in Des Moines



Jan Creasman, President of Loess Hills branch, and her husband Don Doumakes, at the Omaha No Kings Protest.



From Marti Anderson in Des Moines