

## Co-President's Letter

Kim Folkers, AAUW Iowa Co-President

I just hung up from making phone calls to Senator Grassley and Senator Ernst's offices....again. Surprisingly, I actually got a live human being at Grassley's office who listened quietly as I detailed my many concerns about the crisis in Minneapolis and beyond and my plea for Senator Grassley to finally speak up and take a public stand against ICE and their unconstitutional actions. I'm sure many of you have made similar calls, written many emails, and protested in your own communities on this and a wide array of issues over the past long months.

It seemed sadly fitting that the news of Alex Pretti's murder broke Saturday morning while Pat Higby, my AAUW Iowa co-president, and I were attending a brunch held by the Cedar Falls/Waterloo AAUW branch. There were close to 40 of us, including seven who were guests from the Waverly AAUW branch. The program was *Providing Supplemental Education and Supportive Services to Migratory Children*, by Stephanie Leon-Quetzecua, Iowa Migratory Education Program, Identification Specialist. The number one question on brunch attendees' minds was "Given what's going on in our country, what is the level of fear amongst migratory families in NE Iowa, and how is that affecting the work you do in trying to identify and support students whose families are moving for work on a regular basis?"

The meeting also included announcements about upcoming opportunities to get involved and speak out: the January 29th zoom meeting organized by Mary Ann Ahrens on *Truckers Against Trafficking*; Maureen White talked about the *Periods with Dignity* initiative; Linda Morgan updated us on the April 25<sup>th</sup> AAUW state conference; and we were reminded about the February 11th AAUW Iowa Lobby Day in Des Moines being organized by Iowa AAUW Public Policy VP, Diane Kearns. Nancy Henderson, Public Policy VP for the Cedar Falls/Waterloo branch, reviewed an already long list of issues to pay attention to and take action on now that the Iowa Legislature is back in session.



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Leaving that meeting, it would have been possible to feel overwhelmed by the challenges facing our country and our state. However, what I was really struck by is the importance of being part of an organization like AAUW that centers itself on advocacy and fighting for equity, and provides the tools, the forums, and the moral support of like-minded people to forge ahead in what seem like unprecedented times. Stay the course AAUW Iowa members - We ARE having an impact! We ARE making a difference! **We ARE stronger together!**

## AAUW's Winter Member Gathering—Online Event

Wednesday, February 18, 4:30 p.m. ET

Please join us for AAUW's Winter Member Gathering. At this special event, we will:



- Recognize outstanding supporters and branches,
- Update you on the impact of our Strategic Plan's 3 key priorities, and
- Provide you with the information you need to answer our 5 Calls to Action!

[Don't miss this opportunity to celebrate our achievements and learn about our shared impact! Register here.](#)

## Public Policy News

Diane Kearns, AAUW Iowa Public Policy Director

Welcome to Iowa winter everyone. I hope everyone had an enjoyable holiday season with family and friends. The 91<sup>st</sup> Session of the Iowa General Assembly convened on January 12. I have been monitoring legislation on a daily basis and will be sending out the first legislative bill tracker within the next week or two. Our Lobby Day is scheduled for February 11, 2026, beginning at 9:00 a.m. until 11:00 a.m. in Room 305. This is the same room as last year.

Please let me know if you plan to attend. I will be inviting the chairs, vice chairs and ranking members of various committees which fall under our Public Policy Priorities: Education; Health and Human Services; Higher Education; Judiciary; Workforce/Labor and Workforce. I also will be distributing information regarding tips for communicating with legislators.

There are two funnel deadlines. The First Funnel is February 20. A bill must make it through a full committee in the chamber where it was introduced. So, a House bill must pass both a subcommittee and a full committee in the House to remain viable. The Second Funnel is four weeks later, March 20. By that date, bills must pass a full chamber and a full committee in the opposite chamber to remain alive. So a House bill must pass the House and advance through a full Senate committee by the deadline. Not all bills are subject to funnel deadlines. Spending bills and changes to tax policy are exempt. Lawmakers can resurrect bills in other ways, such as adding them as amendments to other bills or by leadership in both chambers cosponsoring a new bill.

One bill which was resurrected from the last Session is SF304. This bill would require parental consent for HPV vaccination. It has passed through Health and Human Services Subcommittee January 14, and they have recommended passage. There are several groups against

this legislation which include Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence; Family Planning Council; American Cancer Society; Planned Parenthood; Iowa Public Health Association. A group called VALOR Iowa is in favor of this legislation. To find out more information about the VALOR group check it out online. They supported repeal of Roe vs Wade.

There are several bills in the Education Committee. A couple of interest from the Education Committee: SF510 passed out of subcommittee 1/20/2026. This bill relates to elective social studies courses emphasizing religious scripture that school districts may offer and teach. The Family Leader and Faith Freedom Coalition are in favor while Iowa League of Women Voters and ISEA are against it.

Another bill, SF2003/HF2121,

prohibits schools districts, charter schools and innovation zone schools from providing any program, curriculum, test, or instruction relating to gender theory or sexual orientation instruction in grades seven through twelve. The Iowa Coalition against Domestic Violence, ACLU, Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement Action Fund are against this bill. In favor are The Family Leader and VALOR Iowa. These two bills passed out of subcommittee this week.

If there are questions regarding a particular piece of legislation, go the legislative website at [www.legis.iowa.gov](http://www.legis.iowa.gov). I have invited the League of Women Voters as well as Tim Glaza from the Public Schools Strong project to join us for Lobby Day. I sent an invitation to both chambers inviting them to meet with our group. As of now I have received responses from Senator Art Staed, Senator Liz Bennett and Representative Megan Srinivas. I hope to see you there.

## Childcare: Iowa's Patchwork Approach

League of Women Voters of Johnston County

Access to affordable and reliable childcare is more than a parental concern. It helps keeps the workforce humming, strengthens childhood learning and well-being, and reflects a caring community. These are some of the reasons that, in 2025, New Mexico became the first state to guarantee no-cost universal child care to all residents.

On March 10, the League of Women Voters of Johnson

County will present "Child Care: Iowa's Patchwork Approach," 6:30-8:00 at the Iowa City Public Library. Speakers Jana Garrels, Neighborhood Centers of Johnson County, Allison Bettine, 4Cs of Johnson County, and Laurie Nash of Johnson County Social Services will enlighten us on current efforts in Johnson County to address the patchwork approach locally.

## AAUW Press Release: VA Abortion Ban Denies Veterans Essential Health Care

WASHINGTON, D.C., December 23, 2025 – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) ended abortion services and abortion counseling at VA facilities, effective immediately — including in cases of rape or incest and when continuing a pregnancy poses serious health risks.

This shift comes before the VA has completed its pending “Reproductive Health Services” rulemaking, which AAUW opposed in public comments.

This abrupt reversal is driven by a new U.S. Department of Justice Office of Legal Counsel (OLC) opinion. The ruling reverses the 2022 OLC position supporting VA’s limited abortion-related care following the Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization decision.

Compared with other federal health programs that generally allow exceptions for rape or incest, the VA’s new approach is especially restrictive. It removes access to care and information that some veterans may not obtain elsewhere.

Statement from Gloria L. Blackwell, AAUW CEO:

Our nation’s veterans deserve comprehensive, evidence-based health care — not political interference that strips them of options and silences medically appropriate counseling.

The VA’s decision to end abortion care (and even abortion counseling) is a profound breach of trust with military servicemembers. It denies veterans — including survivors of rape or incest and those facing serious health risks — the ability to receive timely care and accurate information when they need it most.

AAUW believes full availability of reproductive health care is essential to women’s ability to control their lives, bodies, and futures. Access to abortion care shapes who can truly determine their economic, educational, and reproductive future.

The VA should reverse this harmful shift and ensure that veterans can attain timely, compassionate, medically appropriate care and counseling, guided by health needs, not ideology.

## The AAUW Iowa Board Needs You

Janie Montang, Nominations Committee Chair

We hope you will consider serving on as an officer for AAUW Iowa. Benefits of serving on the AAUW Iowa board include opportunities to:

- meet people from all over the state.
- generate plans with inspiring individuals with novel and motivating ideas.
- practice and expand your own leadership skills.
- thanks to Zoom, attend meetings from the convenience of your own location.

No AAUW branch member should undersell herself/himself when considering becoming a nominee for an office. Anyone who has held a Branch office could skillfully hold the same office at the State level. Additionally, careers and other organizations have adequately prepared members for these posts.

All offices are for two year terms; renewable for two more years. The maximum time in any elected position is four years. Officer terms begin July one. Nominees are presented at the annual conference in April.

Descriptions of functions for all positions are found in the Bylaws, article IX, officers, section 2.

We have very few openings to fill this year. At this time, they include Co-Vice-President for Programming, Vice President for Membership, and Secretary. The next Program Co-VP would work with the current Co-Vice-president, Maxine Lampe.

The Membership Vice President position offers a chance to contact someone you know and volunteer together.

For additional information, go to the website:  
<https://aauw-ia.aauw.net/>

You may also contact a member of the nominations committee or any other current member of the board. Nominations committee members are: Janie Montang, Algona branch, committee chair; Kathie Farris, Indianola branch, past-president; Anne Stansbury-Johnson, Palo Alto branch; Mary Ann Ahrens, eNetwork branch; and Sue Jorgensen, Cedar Rapids branch.

We look forward to hearing from you.

## Loess Hills Branch Working to Meet Period Needs

Jan Creasman, Loess Hills Branch President

The Loess Hills Branch created a survey to determine the need for access to period products in our schools and the consequences without availability. We emailed the survey in October to 152 school superintendents which covered the rural counties north and south of Polk county, including back west to the Nebraska border and all along the Missouri, South Dakota, and Minnesota border.

After 4 contacts to encourage completing the survey and phone attempts to get schools to participate we had 27 responses.

Schools that responded were:

Woodbury Central CSD, CAM Jr/Sr. High School, Okoboji High School, CAM Community School, Glenwood CSD, Glidden-Ralston & Coon Rapids-Bayard, Lamoni Community Schools, Central Decatur Schools, Paton Churdan, Ruthven-Ayrshire, South O'Brien CSD, Cherokee, Clarke Community School District, Glidden-Ralston, Lewis Central, Essex, Westwood CSD, Tri-Center CSD, Glenwood CSD, IKOM-Manning, Whiting CSD, Northwood Kensett, Denison Community Schools, Carroll High School, Carroll Community School District, Red Oak CSD

The survey questions and responses.

### **Does your school offer free hygiene products for periods to your students?**

- 96.3% answered yes, 3.7% said no

### **If yes, what is the delivery method?**

- 50% go to school employees; 15.4% Girls' Bathroom; 34.6% other

### **If other please explain?**

- We have multiple options, they are available in the girls' restrooms, the family restroom, the nurse's office and the main office. We have a drawer in the office students may access
- Nurse's office
- Students can come at their convenience
- In nurse's office and girls' bathrooms
- Central Decatur does not have a clear program per say but we do have female hygiene products available in both of the nurse's offices and our school resource officer also has this available. All available products have been donated to us from the community or other outside sources. If we do not have the donations, we do not have the products. Our school resource officer has a Google sheet set up that can be filled out by any of our students 3-12th grade that allows students to discretely let him know that they are in need of hygiene products. The SRO then works to supply that

student with needed items. Both nurse offices are supplied with small amounts of feminine hygiene products available on request from student.

- Students can obtain supplies in the office from our storage room.
- Both bathroom and dispensed by the nurse.

### **If provided, are products available... free? at reduced cost? at cost to student? at employee's cost? at school's cost? at school cost & free? Donation from community members?**

- 57.7% free
- 34.6% at school cost
- 3.8% at school cost & free
- 3.8% community donations

### **Do you have organizations that are providing feminine hygiene products to schools?**

- 70.4% No
- 29.6% Yes

### **If so, what group(s)?**

- Love For Red
- K.I.S.S and unknown provider
- Church Groups
- Local Food Pantry
- Nurse
- Kiwanis
- Local service organizations

### **Do you have absences due to lack of period products?**

- 51.9% No
- 48.1% Don't know
- 0 Yes

### **Are students using items other than commercial products to handle their periods?**

- 59.3% Don't know
- 37% No
- 3.7% yes

### **Are students reporting the need to choose between buying essential items such as food, medicine, etc... instead of feminine hygiene products?**

- 55.6 No
- 44.4 Don't know
- 0 yes

### **Do you currently have a point person working with students if this is an issue?**

- 96.3% yes
- 3.7% no

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**If yes, what is the position or title of this person?**

- 1 Student & family advocate
- 7 Nurses
- 1 Nurse or SRO
- 6 School counselors
- 1 Health office staff
- 2 School nurse or counselors
- 1 School SW or Superintendent
- 6 Health office staff or secretary

**Would you be interested in working with an organization outside of the school for fulfilling student needs?**

- 74.1% yes
- 25.9% no
- List of schools are available upon request

**Is there anything you are hearing from your female students that is an obstacle to their education? Please explain.**

- 5 – No
- 3 – N/A
- Clothing if they bleed through
- Missed days due to symptoms of menstruation. Nausea, Loose stools, Migraines
- When they leak through onto their pants. We have extra clothes but not always what they need so they may have a

parent bring some or have to go home to change.

- I am the nurse for lower elementary grades PK-6th and I occasionally have students from low income families that come to me to help them meet their needs in the female hygiene department. I assume that it is very hard for them to ask for these products, and if unable to obtain, I do believe that school attendance could become a problem for these students. Peer relationships could also likely be affected.
- Access to Midol like products.

**If yes, please provide school contact information**

- 5 schools desired assistance from the branch

While the overall response isn't statistically significant, I do see that a significant number of schools that don't know if absences due to lack of period products; students using items other than commercial products to handle their periods; and students reporting the need to choose between buying essential items such as food, medicine, etc... instead of feminine hygiene products.

This issue definitely is an area in which school resources with product and staff time are being utilized at school expense. I was able to gain contacts that may produce outreach for membership with branches or developing branches.

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## AAUW Iowa Spring Conference—Stronger Together

Maxine Lampe and Linda Morgan, AAUW Iowa Program Co-Vice Presidents

It's not too early to save the date and register for the STRONGER TOGETHER CONFERENCE on Saturday, April 25<sup>th</sup>.

Speakers have been secured and bios will be posted on the state website soon.

There will be a reception on Friday evening from 7 – 9 pm to honor Legacy Circle members. Everyone who is spending the night in Cedar Falls is invited to attend. This will be a social event with no program involved. The location for the reception has not yet been determined—watch for the next issue.

There are many local hotels in the area but no block of rooms will be reserved for members.

Branches are encouraged to share our conference news with friends and any women centric organizations in your area.

**REMEMBER – WE ARE STRONGER TOGETHER.**

### AAUW Iowa Spring Conference

#### Stronger Together

Saturday, April 25 from 8am-4pm

Diamond Events Center (same as last year)

5307 Caraway Lane, Cedar Falls, IA

\$50 for members and guests, \$20 for students

Meals included with registration—Light breakfast and buffet lunch, beverages and snacks

Program—Higher Education, Book Banning, Immigration  
AAUW Annual Meeting / Task Force Displays /  
Public Policy Report / AAUW Fundraiser

Early Registration fee can be paid to:

Treasurer Nancy Henderson, 2989 Jepsen Rd, Cedar Falls, IA 50613

Online payment option coming soon

Please pay by Monday, April 6.

Branches can collect fees from members and send in one check for the group.

There will be a reception on Friday from 7-9 pm to honor Legacy Circle members. Anyone arriving Friday evening is invited to attend. Location will be announced later.

## Has Your Branch Hosted a NUDGE Party? Start Making Plans!

Chris Louscher, Algona branch, and Ann Gale, Des Moines and eNetwork branches

Why should your branch hold a **NUDGE** party? A NUDGE party is a good way to bring new people to your branch who might not come otherwise. Having a NUDGE party has the potential to increase membership. It is an opportunity to show women in your area that your members are concerned about increasing the number of women serving on boards and commissions and running for office. The purpose of the NUDGE party is to encourage women to think about running for office, so of course the program will focus on that. While you do that, make membership materials available, and invite attendees to join AAUW, whether or not they plan on running for office.

Women have made political progress since 2010, when Maggie Tinsman and Jean Lloyd Jones founded 50-50 in 2020. Our governor is a woman and three of the six people who represent us in Washington are women. Are NUDGE parties still needed? YES! In 2025, there were 14 women and 36 men in the Iowa Senate. The Iowa House was comprised of 27 women and 73 men. In city councils

in Iowa, about 29% of city councilors are women. In Iowa school boards, about 40 of board positions are held by women, and women hold about 26% of board president roles. We think that there is room for progress, and this is a place for us to help.



### What is a NUDGE Party, and what is its purpose?

The acronym N.U.D.G.E. stands for “No Use Delaying Gender Equity.” A NUDGE Party is an informal, bipartisan gathering of women and men of any age whose purpose it is to raise awareness of the importance of politics in their lives; to encourage one another to support female candidates, work on women’s campaigns, and nudge women to run for office.

### Where is a NUDGE Party held?

A NUDGE Party is held in a home, office, church, school, hotel, or any place the hosts deem to be a welcoming and appropriate venue.

### Who are the hosts?

Hosts may be individuals, clubs, professional groups, business colleagues, or anyone else who thinks electing more women to public office is a worthy goal.

### How do we organize a NUDGE Party?

1. Recruit bipartisan hosts. It is ideal to have an equal number of Democrat and Republican hosts, if at all possible.
2. Develop an invite list. Include names, mailing addresses, email addresses, and telephone numbers.
3. Set the date, time, and place for the NUDGE Party.
4. Recruit an individual or organization to provide snacks and beverages.

5. Send invitations via email and/or regular mail approximately three weeks prior to the party. If sending invitations via email and regular mail, send the regular mail invitations three weeks prior to the party, and then send an email invitation two weeks prior to the party. The email can serve as a reminder about the regular mail invitation.
6. Make follow up phone calls to drive party turnout. This should be done just a few days before the party.
7. Plan the program. Items to include:
  - Host welcome
  - Introductions (One idea for introductions is to have each person introduce herself and tell what office she has held in the past, currently holds, or would like to hold.)
8. Summarize the current/updated goal: to fill the pipeline with qualified women, whether a local office, state level office, or a board or commission. Organizers will inform women of a variety of opportunities and give them the necessary information to apply or run for office.
9. Hold the event. Have all attendees sign in and wear name tags.
10. Send thank you notes via email and/or regular mail.
11. Celebrate! You are doing important work to further 50-50 in 2020’s mission of “Getting Women Elected!”

## Join Us for a Virtual Event about Street Grace A Mission to End Sexual Exploitation of Children

Mary Ann Aherns, AAUW Iowa HT Chair

**SAVE THE DATE for Sunday afternoon, March 29, 2026. Join us from 3:00 - 4:00 pm central standard time** for the second 2026 AAUW Iowa Human Trafficking Prevention ZOOM Learning Event to gain new knowledge about another dynamic stakeholder making an impact in the United States whose *mission is to end sexual exploitation of children by focusing on prevention, protection, policy and pursuit.*

[Click here to join that meeting.](#)

**Street Grace** was founded in 2008 in Norcross, Georgia by a Presbyterian woman and now exists in five states: Georgia, Tennessee, Florida, Arizona, and Texas. Recent statistics tell us that in the past 15 years the number of children among identified victims has tripled to 35% or one-third of all victims, which is one of the greatest evils of our day.

By collaborating with faith, business and community leaders **Street Grace** is finding unique and creative ways to address the issue by leveraging the latest innovations, technology, and pioneering solutions to find success using AI online to significantly decrease human trafficking demand to protect our children. With the assistance of Microsoft engineers/employees and law enforcement they are using technology to identify and interrupt predators which



includes links to recovery resources.

Nick Lembo, Executive Director of Street Grace Arizona, will introduce participants to Street Grace, their range of services and their significant staff expertise and outreach actions that are responsible for their success in serving people from all walks of life. Since 2009, Nick has been involved standing against Human Trafficking and is networked across the nation with anti-trafficking

organizations, speaking to advocates at national conferences, state, and regional meetings. He is responsible for overseeing their Demand Reduction Cyber Patrol Program and serves as Program Director in the strategic partnership for the Arizona Anti-Trafficking

Network overseeing *Just Men Arizona*. He actively recruits men as volunteers to engage the buyers to disrupt demand.

This provides men with a unique opportunity to engage in the fight against sex trafficking. He has many years of experience dealing with men's issues and human trafficking, having spoken with hundred of sex buyers and those addicted to pornography.

He is also an Emeritus Board Member of Shared Hope International, a Founding Board Member of the Rebecca Bender Initiative, and is presently the Board President of the Genesis Project.



**STREET GRACE™**

## Join in a Virtual Meeting about Truckers Against Trafficking



**Join us on Thursday afternoon, January 29, 2026 from 3:00-4:00 pm CST** for the first 2026 AAUW Iowa Human Trafficking Prevention ZOOM learning event. This presentation will provide new knowledge about another dynamic stakeholder making an impact in the United States by tackling human trafficking awareness, education, action, and prevention. Use this link to join:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2017201809?  
pwd=WXcyREhjclOZINQMUtmZjICU0RQQT09&omn=86273963329](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2017201809?pwd=WXcyREhjclOZINQMUtmZjICU0RQQT09&omn=86273963329)

**TRUCKERS AGAINST TRAFFICKING** was founded by a Texas mother, her four daughters and a friend. TAT comprehensively serves North America through partnerships with transportation and energy professionals.

Speaker Sara Sefried is the director of strategic partnership with TAT. She has more than 23 years of experience advancing programs for survivors of interpersonal violence.



## 2026 Iowa Equal Pay Day and Minimum Wage Advocacy Branch Data and Ideas for Support

Mary Ann Ahrens

**DID YOU KNOW** that **March 4** is **national Equal Pay Day** and **March 24** is **International All Women's Equal Pay Day**. **March is also Women's History Month**. Have you given any thought to what you and/or your branch would do to share information with your members or community? **What a wonderful opportunity to confirm our Value, use our Voices and be Visible!**

**DID YOU KNOW** that the pay gap between American men and women widened for the first time in two decades according to the *September 2025 U.S. Census Bureau Data*. In 2024 women were paid 81 cents down from 83 cents in 2023 and 84 cents in 2022. \* **Currently the national pay gap is 81 cents. In Iowa, our pay gap is 21% (79 cents)**. Keep in mind that the pay gap reports vary from one to two cents based on specific jobs and demographics.



**DID YOU KNOW** that Iowa Legislators have not raised the minimum wage for 18 years (2008). Every state surrounding Iowa has raised their minimum wage except Wisconsin. Democrats in the IOWA Senate introduced the *Working Families and Affordability Plan* Bill to lower living costs and raise wages from a stagnate \$7.25 to \$15. The Plan includes annual inflation increases, freezing utility rates, limiting rent increases, employer provided paid leave, repeal of the Education Savings Account to redirect funding toward health care, etc.

**How long and how many more Iowans must struggle in poverty before the Iowa Legislature and Congress take ACTION to increase the Minimum Wage?** Based on the current conditions, it is important to support the increase

in the minimum wage. **On February 11 AAUW Iowa members will be at the Capitol for Lobby Day** which provides an opportunity to visit with our legislators about the pay gap and minimum wage issues. The necessity of Equal Pay Day and minimum wage advocacy efforts is a stark reminder to our elected officials of what is at stake! Iowa's governor selected a new State theme "Freedom to Flourish." If so, for whom? Following are some ideas:\*\*

- Wear Red Day! It symbolizes how far women/minorities are "in the red" regarding pay equity.
- Write a letter to the editor or op ed about the gender pay gap and/or the stalled minimum wage and its impact on poor Iowans.
- Create an "unhappy hour" at a local coffee shop. Urge people to sign a petition or write out an available postcard to their Legislators and Congressional Delegation.
- With advanced publicity, ring church bells for 5 minutes at noon in your community or downtown or on street corners on Equal Pay Day.
- Have an Equal Pay Day Bake Sale where women pay 81 cents of the cost of an item while men pay 100% of the cost. Donate the proceeds to the AAUW Fund or for a branch project.
- Plan a rally on a college campus with students. Consider music and speakers about what Equal Pay means to them. Have a poster-making party before.
- Consider brief, creative ways to include information at the K-12 level in the classroom.

AAUW IOWA will provide Iowa Legislators with a **February 2026 - America's Women and the Wage Gap Fact Sheet** and a Pay Day candy bar delivered to their desks in March.

\*U.S. Census Bureau Data, September 2025

\*\* AAUW Equal Pay Day Resource Kit

### NCCWSL at NASPA: Registration Open

We are pleased to share that registration for the 2026 National Conference for College Women Student Leaders (NCCWSL) is now open. NCCWSL offers an exciting program that includes a transformative experience in leadership development, networking, and inspiration. Please visit [NASPA's website](#) for the most up-to-date information. The conference will be held at the University of Maryland, College Park, from May 27-30, 2026. [Register today!](#)

### Dues Update

Reminder: The AAUW Board of Directors voted to increase national dues last February 2025. Beginning April 1, 2026, national member dues will increase \$2 to \$76. [Learn more here.](#)

### Virtual Economic Empowerment Trainings

AAUW's virtual webinar series offers expert-led training in salary negotiation, financial literacy, and career development to help women advance professionally and economically. [Explore our upcoming webinars today!](#)

## How Can AAUW Fund Its Work?

Karen Agee, AAUW IA AAUW Fund Director

We all want to help accomplish AAUW's goals and fund its research and advocacy projects. Our dues are no longer sufficient to do it all. We can help by donating to AAUW's Greatest Need Fund. AAUW will allocate from that fund to whichever gender equity project needs funding.

At <https://www.aauw.org/about/ways-to-support/>, the AAUW website provides multiple ways to give—and to credit each donor's branch as part of the Five-Star Program. Here are two easy options:

1. Sign in and donate on the AAUW website. Click the Donate button for the AAUW Greatest Needs Fund and provide credit card information.

2. Are you reducing your taxable income by donating from an IRA every year? Are you over 73 and taking a Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) from your IRA? AAUW is a 501(c)(3) organization (federal tax ID #52-6037388). When you know the dollar amount of your RMD each year, you can tell your financial institution to transmit funds to AAUW or to mail a check to AAUW (Attn: Planned Giving IRA Distribution), 1310 L St. NW, Suite 1000, Washington DC 20005.

Together we can make sure AAUW has the funds to handle what needs to be done!

## League of Women Voters of Metro Des Moines Offers Online Book Discussions

We have been invited to participate in online book discussions with the LWV of Metro Des Moines. You do not need to be a member of LWV, but you need to register. Use the registration links below. On March 14, there will be a discussion about *Dear Marty: We Crapped in Our Nest*. Author Art Cullen will be joining this discussion. Look for that registration link closer to that date.

**Left Image: Book Discussion: "ON TYRANNY" by Timothy Snyder**

**Summary**  
The Founding Fathers tried to protect us from the threat they knew, the tyranny that overcame ancient democracy. Today, our political order faces new threats, not unlike the totalitarianism of the twentieth century. We are no wiser than the Europeans who saw democracy yield to fascism, Nazism, or communism. Our one advantage is that we might learn from their experience. *On Tyranny* is a call to arms and a guide to resistance, with invaluable ideas for how we can preserve our freedoms in the uncertain years to come.

**#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER**  
A "bracing" (Vox) guide for surviving and resisting America's turn towards authoritarianism, from "a rising public intellectual unafraid to make bold connections between past and present" (The New York Times)

**Date:** Saturday, Jan. 31st  
**Time:** 10 am – 12:00pm  
**Location:** Virtual via Zoom

Please join us whether you have read the book or not.

[Click to register](#)

Questions? Concerns? Contact Christie Gerken, clger453@yahoo.com, (402) 740-0198"

**Right Image: Book Discussion: The Untold Story of Women of Color in the League of Women Voters.**

**Summary**  
*The Untold Story of Women of Color in the League of Women Voters*, by Dr. Carolyn Jefferson-Jenkins, is praised as a vital, eye-opening account revealing the marginalized history of women of color within the LWV, exposing the organization's struggles with racism, and highlighting their essential contributions to suffrage and civil rights, offering a path toward a more inclusive future for the League and society by using primary sources to detail policy shifts and personal experiences of exclusion and resistance.

**Date:** Feb. 14th,  
**Time:** 10 am – 11:30 am  
**Location:** Virtual via Zoom

**Special Note:** We are pleased to announce that the author, Dr. Carolyn Jefferson-Jenkins, will be joining us for the book discussion.

Please join us whether you have read the book or not.

Questions? Concerns? Email John Olsen at [drvote2@gmail.com](mailto:drvote2@gmail.com)

To register: <https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/KXIJ71LqSui-OSrosH1Osg#/registration>

To register: <https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/ZRV8IKoGSfelfulw59qmyA#/registration>

## We are on the front lines of world peace – right at home

Kathleen Laurila, AAUW Iowa International Relations Director

The ultimate issue for “international relations” is genial relations between and among countries in the world... peace among the nations. But what is entailed in getting to that state of being are a multitude of issues and strategies. Since its inception in 1881, AAUW’s strategy has been through becoming educated and recognizing and defending the human rights of all people. As one of three national organizations to form the International Federation of University Women (now Graduate Women International) in 1919 AAUW stated, “that by fostering friendship and understanding, women graduates could help prevent another catastrophe such as the World War that had just ended.”

What is “peace?” Yes, the absence of war and violence and the cry for justice. However, the latest [Global Peace Index](#) shows a steady 10-year decline in global peace, and now nearing our own doorstep. A state of peace also needs inclusivity, access to justice, and effective and accountable institutions – as stated by the General Assembly of the United Nations with the passage of the Sustainable Development Goals in 2000.

How does an Iowa member bring peace among nations? As with all that we do, we start at home and in our communities. We have learned to negotiate and adhere to not using nastiness to settle disagreements. We have learned to use our knowledge and organizing and persuading skills to educate about and advocate for policies that embrace fairness. We welcome immigrants and refugees fleeing violence, famine and economic collapse who are seeking refuge in our communities – the world has come to our doorsteps. And so have the strategies being used in the world.

Internationally, armed retaliation has been the predominant method of opposing armed violence with the non-combatant civilian casualties now far greater than that of the warriors. That seemed so far away – then.

Now that our neighbors in Minnesota and Illinois have been facing violence from masked and armed officials outside their own homes, we, too, may begin to fear being

caught in unwarranted violence for which we may be unprepared.

However, there are now proven methods we can embrace and learn that have been developed through the years that adheres to nonviolent responses, and now embedded in the laws of several countries and agreements within the United Nations structures. Officially, these techniques are referred to as [Unarmed Civilian Protection \(UCP\)](#). These methods have been used to protect civilians in such countries as Columbia, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Philippines, South Sudan, Iraq, Ukraine, etc.

There are more than 40 NGOs partnering with local people in sharing and practicing these methods globally, with the largest of them based in the Twin Cities. This group realized that the need for our own citizens to learn [defensive non-violent methods](#) has become critical, starting with the protectors of the water from oil pipelines at Standing Rock a few years ago, and now so needed in Minnesota and Maine. Because of media reports, we can see the protesting responses of the citizens innately responding to the terror being perpetrated on their neighbors. However, even without the specific training, most are calmly protesting within legal parameters (“I’m not mad at you”), accompanying neighbors to medical appointments, covering the newspaper route for the boy next door who’s afraid to go outside because his pay is critical for his family, organizing food and supply runs, and sharing concerns for democracy with friends...and most important, witnessing.

With our education about our Constitution and civil rights, and as community leaders while located in every corner of our State, we are on the “front lines” of peace. We need to be brave, as our relations with the rest of the world depend on it.

One of 17 United Nations [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDG\)](#) to be achieved by 2020.



**Take a Stand**  
An advisory committee led by the U.S. Department of Education is considering different borrowing limits for “graduate” vs. “professional” degrees. This change may deter women from pursuing advanced degrees, especially since women more often rely on student loans. You’ll have the opportunity to weigh in with a public comment — [sign up for AAUW Action Network alerts to stay up to date](#).