

THE SPOKESWOMAN

<https://davis-ca.aauw.net>

AAUW Public Policy Updates

By Stephanie DeGraff-Hunt

March and April have been extremely active months for AAUW Public Policy. Much research and planning goes into Public Policy. My goal in this newsletter is to provide information and inspire our members to support the work of AAUW California and AAUW National.

Lobby Days 2024 were held on April 2nd and 3rd and took place either via Zoom or in person. The background work in making Lobby Days possible is extremely time-consuming and complicated given the number of people involved with their particular requests and schedules. Team members learn to be flexible as last-minute adjustments may occur and everyone is encouraged to be prepared to advocate for all three of the bills given that they may be moved to a different team or even be invited to join additional team presentations. This happened to me in the past two years, adding to the excitement and intensity of preparation. On the positive side, this allowed me to meet more AAUW advocates from all over our state.

Kathy Van Osten is our AAUW CA Legislative Advocate and Partner at MVM Strategy in Sacramento and has represented AAUW CA in the California Legislature since 2020. Her office served as a home base for those of us who had in-person meetings and is located in the Old Senator Hotel at 1121 L Street just north of the State Capitol Building. Amy Hom and Missy Maceyko, our new co-chairs of the AAUW California Public Policy Committee, worked closely with Kathy Van Osten and former AAUW CA Public Policy Chair, Kathi Harper, to select the three key bills that the lobby teams would advocate for. They strive to have Lobby Team members meet with legislative staff from their district, although that is not guaranteed. When I first became involved in advocacy in Lobby Days I naively thought that we would actually be meeting with our own Assembly Member or State Senator. That is simply not the case. Now that I have observed the intensity of life in the

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April 2024 Calendar

Tuesday, April 2 and Wednesday, April 3:
Lobby Days

Wednesday, April 3: AAUW National Election opens; voting closes on May 15 at 9 am

Saturday, April 13, 9 am: Book Group meeting by Zoom: "Pelosi" by Molly Ball

Tuesday, April 9 and Thursday, April 11:
Tech Trek Applicant Interviews

Monday, April 15, 5:30 pm: Annual Business Meeting and Election of Board Members at Black Bear Diner

Wednesday, April 17, 4 pm: [It's My Vote! AAUW Priorities in the 2024 Election Webinar](#)

Friday, April 19, Celebrate the 19th (canceled this month since we are meeting on April 15)

Saturday, April 27, 9 am to noon: [2024 AAUW CA Annual Event - Back to School! Webinar](#)

AAUW Public Policy Updates Continued

State buildings and the rigorous calendar of each legislator, I appreciate the opportunity to meet and advocate with a member of the legislator's staff. They, in turn, will do additional research and present our views to the legislator. Likewise, each Lobby Team leader remains in contact with the member of the legislator's staff to further advocate for our three key bills.

This year, I had the opportunity to team up with Patrice Lyn from the Morgan Hills branch. Last year, Sally Ho and I from the Davis branch were on Patrice's team. We enjoyed working with each other and were happy to see that we were once again on the same team. Karen Lemcke, a dual Davis and Chico member, was initially on our team but was then moved to another team. However, on the evening of April 1st, more changes took place and Karen came back to work with Patrice and me. Plus, Patrice and I were added to the team that Karen had been moved to. Yes, it gets a bit crazy, but with phone calls it all worked out.

Karen Lemcke and I drove together, met Patrice outside the huge Legislative Office Building at 1021 O Street, just south of the State Capitol at 8:55 AM, and had an hour to practice our introductions and advocacy points before we met with Isabella Martinez, the Legislative Aide to Senator Monique Limon from District 19 (Santa Barbara County and 60% of Ventura County). It was a very productive and insightful meeting as we learned even more about Senator Limon and the key roles she has on an amazing number of committees including Chair of the Democratic Caucus, Chair of Banking and Financial Institutions, Chair of the Select Committee on the Non-Profit Sector, Vice Chair of Joint Emergency Management Committee, Chair of the the UC Square and CSU Round Table, Member of the Health, Transportation, Natural Resources, and Energy Committees.



Stephanie and Karen at the Secretary of State Building

AAUW Public Policy Updates Continued



We had a quick field trip across the street to see the Constitution Wall which is inside the Secretary of State's Office and the California History Museum. Then it was back to the Legislative Office where we met with Karen's other team of Kim Monson (Mariposa branch) and Donna Kindschuh and Maile Melkaonian (Visalia-Sequoia branch). In a sunny location on the 3rd floor, the team practiced introductions and advocacy for each bill in preparation for the noon meeting with Gavin Blena and Zachary Kirkhoff, legislative aides for Assemblyman Patterson from District 8 (Calaveras, Fresno, Inyo, Madera, Mariposa, Mono, and Tuolumne counties). Karen did a great job highlighting the law and order aspect of Assembly Bill 2843 that undoubtedly would be of great interest to Assemblyman Patterson's district.

L to R: Karen, Isabella, Patrice, and Stephanie

Afterward, we passed through the State Capitol and joined our AAUW advocates and Public Policy co-chairs at La Bou Restaurant from 12:00 to 1:30. This again provides time for AAUW members across the state to meet and share what their branches are doing and how they are motivating younger women to become members. After lunch, teams then headed out for their meetings.

At this juncture, Patrice, Karen, Kim, Donna, Maile, and I had the opportunity to have an extended meeting with Amy Hom, Missy Maceyko, and Kathi Harper. We met in the conference room in Kathy Van Osten's office and learned more about the process of how bills are selected and saw the Public Policy team's excitement to have helped write AB2834 with Assembly Member Cottie Petrie-Norris, representing the 73rd Assembly District (central Orange County). The article below explains how AAUW selects the key bills for advocacy.

Another way to participate as an active AAUW member is to sign up for the [Two-Minute Activist](#). AAUW CA plans to highlight the Two-Minute Activist in the coming months. We learned that if lots of activist messages are sent to legislators, the impact of our advocacy is increased. Key areas where we need your support and action include pay equity, equity in education, reproductive rights, and the ERA. Through the [AAUW and AAUW Action Fund It's My Vote](#) voter engagement campaign, AAUW members can learn how to engage in local voter education efforts. See webinar details in the AAUW National News section.

I sincerely hope that you are inspired to become a vital part of upholding the AAUW mission.

AAUW California Public Policy Committee Sets 2024 Legislative Agenda

By Amy Hom and Missy Maceyko, Co-chairs AAUW California Public Policy Committee

The Public Policy Committee met virtually over a weekend in early March to set AAUW California's 2024 Legislative Agenda. Through a day and a half of discussions, we reviewed 67 bills, considering their merits and potential costs and their alignment with our public policy priorities. Then, we went through a voting/ranking process to select the top bills we would advance as our Legislative Agenda.

Our legislative agenda consists of three "A" priority bills, four "B" priority bills, twenty-nine "C" priority bills, and twelve spot bills that we are watching. Seven of the bills on our legislative agenda are 2-year bills that carried over from last year. All of the bills on our agenda fall under at least one of our four Public Policy Priority pillars; one bill - AB 2349 - falls under three pillars.

Excitingly, our signature "A" priority bill AB 2843 "Health Care Coverage for Rape and Sexual Assault Survivors" was authored by AAUW California. The bill is sponsored by AAUW California and falls under two of our Public Policy Priorities, "Social and Racial Justice for All Members of Society" and "Economic Security for All Women". The bill eliminates cost-sharing, including deductibles, from being imposed on any rape survivor seeking medical care following a rape. Insurers will be required to cover the cost of medical care with no copay. AB 2843 ensures that those individuals who wish to report a rape and file charges will have the benefit of a rape kit test and forensic exam to provide evidence to secure more convictions for acts of sexual violence. In addition, they can receive the care they need following a traumatic sexual attack. (See the Lobby Days Talking Points and Bill Text for more details.)

Our second "A" priority bill, AB 2326 "Title IX Oversight and Compliance Act" is also sponsored by AAUW California. This bill falls under our Public Policy Priorities pillar "Equal Access to Quality Education for All Students" and champions something that AAUW California has long supported: Title IX enforcement. AB 2326 requires the Chancellors of the Community Colleges and State Universities and the President of the University of California to provide an annual report of their compliance with Title IX, with the report to be presented publicly and orally to the Senate and Assembly Budget Subcommittees on Higher Education Finance, a move to hold the systems, and their leaders, more publicly accountable.

While we are listing AB 2326 as an "A" priority bill, a large number of Title IX-related bills were introduced this year, likely prompted by the [2023 State Auditor's Report 2022-109](#), which concluded that the CSU system's handling of Title IX-related complaints has not adequately addressed allegations of inequity, harassment, and sexual harassment. While a great deal of the introduced Title IX legislation has not yet fully taken shape, we are watching them, as they will potentially become priority bills. In addition, one of the more fully developed bills, AB 1790, is listed as a "B" priority bill on our agenda.

AAUW California Public Policy Committee Sets 2024 Legislative Agenda Continued

Our third “A” priority bill is AB 2099, “Protecting Reproductive Health Clinics”. This bill falls under our Public Policy Priorities pillar “Social and Racial Justice for All Members of Society”. The bill makes it possible for the D.A. to file a felony charge for sharing personal information or images of individuals such as reproductive health care providers or patients, with the intent of causing harm or violence against them, if the posting and subsequent action results in bodily injury. With [violence against abortion providers continuing to rise following the reversal of Roe](#), the protection of providers and patients is now more important than ever.

To see our full 2024 Legislative Agenda, please go to our [Bill Tracking Report](#). This report will continue to be updated as the bills move through the legislative process, so you will always be able to see the latest status.

Our Branch Could Ensure AAUW’s Future Success

Special contribution, AAUW California

This April, we will again vote on a bylaws amendment to eliminate the degree requirement for AAUW membership. The state board recently voted to support the move because they believe it will help AAUW become the inclusive organization that many of us strive to see. Our branch could join the effort to set AAUW up for success in the coming years.

Many of us have been in the situation of meeting prospective members who are interested in AAUW and share our mission of equity for women and girls. We are then faced with having to ask them about their educational attainment to see if they would qualify for membership. It is difficult to ask and can lead to embarrassment for the prospective member if they don’t meet the standard and the loss for us of their passion, skills, and potential contributions.

They cannot join due to a requirement that was established 143 years ago.

Over the years AAUW members have voted to modify the membership requirements to reflect the ever-changing social climate:

- 1949 – Allowed those with approved degrees from sanctioned and accredited four-year colleges or universities to join both National AND branches (which effectively allowed women of color to join AAUW)
- 1963- Admitted those holding degrees, including nursing, education and home economics, from any regionally accredited institution
- 1987 – Extended membership to male college graduates
- 2005 – Relaxed membership requirement to include graduates who hold an associate or equivalent degree from a qualified educational institution

Our Branch Could Ensure AAUW's Future Success Continued

How many potential members are we losing because AAUW has this eligibility requirement?

- We lose younger women and men who meet the education requirement but don't want to join an organization that seems elitist to them.
- We lose women and men who share our vision for the future but because of a myriad of circumstances, they could not attain a college degree. This did not keep them from having careers or joining other activist organizations. They just cannot join AAUW.

We lose donations from organizations that support our mission but do not understand why one must have a college degree to work towards gender equity.

Some members object to open membership because they wonder, "What will our name be?" AAUW's name doesn't need to change at all. We have been known as AAUW since the 1920s (two separate organizations merged) and so it has historic value as well as name recognition. We have allowed men to belong for nearly 40 years and no one felt the need for a change back then. We will be like other long-time organizations who have changed membership requirements over their histories but retained their names (e.g. GEICO, YMCA). When we talk about the organization, we can say "I belong to AAUW and we work for equity for women and girls." The initials are less important than our wonderful mission and actions.

While AAUW is an organization that fully supports women getting a college education in the field of their choice, we need to recognize that education comes in many forms. In our professional lives, we have worked with many women and men who did not have a formal degree. This is not a measure of intelligence or ability...sometimes it is the lack of opportunity or choices made early in life that are difficult to reverse. According to the 2021 Census, just 34% of Americans aged 25 to 29 years completed four years of college. We are missing out on many voices that we need in this fight for equity.

Throughout the past 143 years, AAUW members have never stopped advocating for education while expanding our focus on ensuring effective policies around family leave, reproductive rights, equal pay, and policies against sexual harassment and violence against women. Welcoming those without a degree will not change who we are and what we are working towards- it will enhance our efforts by including anyone as passionate as we are about equity for women and girls.

We need every woman and man who supports our mission – empowering women and girls – to join us in the ongoing challenge of achieving gender equity.

Annual Business Meeting and Board Member Election on April 15

This year marks 58 proud years for the Davis AAUW Branch and it is time to cast your vote for the board member nominees to serve the Davis branch for the July 1, 2024-June 30, 2025 period. The election will take place in person at the upcoming annual branch meeting.

While this is our annual business meeting for voting members to cast their vote in person, it is also an opportunity to attend an in-person social gathering. All members, future potential members, students, and interns are invited to join us at this event. This year we are delighted at the prospect of expanding our membership by adding members from the Woodland branch and are looking forward to having some of them join us at this meeting.

We will meet on **April 15th at 5:30 at the Black Bear Diner** (255 Second Street) in Davis to cast our vote.

Davis Branch Board Member Candidates 2024-2025

I completed my undergrad work at UCD in Spanish, my Secondary Teaching Credential at Chico State, and my Masters in Spanish Literature at UCD. Before teaching for 30 years in the Spanish Immersion Program here in Davis at the 4th and 5th grade level I taught 4th grade in Peru at the American School. My husband and I met in Peru and after we were married we taught in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia for two years before coming to Davis. At one point in our California careers, we took a leave and worked in Cairo, Egypt at the Cairo American College. Early in my career in Davis, I had an amazing summer-long Fulbright Scholarship in Argentina and Ecuador where the goal was to write cultural and linguistic curriculum units for the SPICE program based at Stanford University. A follow-up Summer Fulbright Scholarship took me to Costa Rica for the creation of more curriculum units.

**Stephanie DeGraff-Hunt,
Candidate for President**



Curriculum development is critical and for three summers I participated in a month-long Math Program through UCD and Sacramento University to help develop more engaging math instruction and units. Follow-up Saturdays were held once every other month throughout the school year for the duration of this program. It was an amazing learning experience and led to excellent results in the classroom.

Annual Business Meeting and Board Member Election on April 15 Continued

I grew up in Chico, where my mom was active in AAUW. I became a member in Davis in 2015 after being invited to join by Estelle and Rhonda. I have wonderful memories of completing my AAUW member registration at a lovely September potluck in Juliana's backyard celebrating the four Tech Trek campers.

I began to attend the Celebrate the Nineteenth events and the Annual Business Meetings and upon becoming a board member-at-large, participated in a special AAUW celebration for Equal Pay in April of 2019 at the State Capitol. This sparked my interest in Public Policy and involvement in AAUW CA Lobby Days held in person with legislators in early April. Lobby Days provide a powerful way to advocate AAUW values with the California Assembly and Senate.

I am an engaged AAUW member and continue to help significantly with all things Tech Trek and coordinate and plan the AAUW booth for the Fall International Festival. I actively support our Annual Yard Sale and our Annual December Donation events. Once Covid hit, I discovered the Zoom book group meetings, which were terrific especially as members attended from Davis, Vacaville, and Woodland. We also invited authors from far away to speak with us.

Via Zoom I have interviewed UCD interns and speaker candidates for the IBC Luncheon and Annual Meeting and was happy this year that we met in person to hear from Fellowship and Grant recipients. I was very involved in the speaker selection and their presentation at the January gathering.

It is an honor to serve as President of the Davis Branch of AAUW. I look forward to expanding our connections with the United Nations Association and the UCD student affiliates to create a visible presence in our area.



Gail Johnson, Candidate for Board Treasurer

I have been a member of AAUW Davis since 1974 when I moved to Davis with my family. I am a mother of two grown sons. In 2021, I moved to Winters where I live with my youngest son Nick, his partner Cheree, and their children Patrick (7) and Nathaniel (almost 4), in a busy household.

I taught for 40 years, 26 of those as a first-grade teacher at Pioneer School, retired since 2010. I have always maintained my AAUW membership and served the branch as newsletter editor, membership VP, President, and financial officer since the mid-90s. I believe finances require continuity and would love to train someone to take over.

Annual Business Meeting and Board Member Election on April 15 Continued



Rhonda Reed, Candidate for Board Member at Large

AAUW has been an important part of Rhonda's life, growing up with a mother who was the first in her family to attend college. She joined AAUW in 1979 and is a lifetime member, following in the footsteps of her mother who was also a lifetime member. AAUW has been Rhonda's connection to the community and supportive women throughout her career as a Fisheries Biologist (now retired) in a male-dominated profession.

AAUW also provided many leadership development opportunities that supported her career development from a strictly technical role to a managerial role in her profession. Rhonda has served the branch in a variety of roles, including the longest-running President/Executive Officer terms. She currently serves on the board as a member-at-large and represents the Davis Branch on the Capital Counties Interbranch Council (IBC). Rhonda enjoys exploring different points of view through the branch's book group discussions and programs featuring guest speakers. As a scientist, she is especially excited about the Davis Branch's involvement in Tech Trek targeted at middle school girls. Rhonda has supported the Tech Trek camp at UCD from its inception in 2011 and, before Covid, she and Leslie hosted the Junior Counselors the night before the first day of camp.

During the 2024-25 year, Rhonda wants to continue to support girls through the Branch's involvement in the Tech Trek program, to recruit new members, and to support the UCD AAUW Student Organization.

Annual Business Meeting and Board Member Election on April 15 Continued



Juliana Wells, Candidate for Board Member-at-Large

I taught grades 3-6 in Woodland for 30 years. Then I joined AAUW. As a member, I was Membership Chair, Secretary, and President for two terms. I also ran the CHOICES program, a mother-6th grade daughter group for discussing school and social relationships and actions. I was the Spokeswoman Editor and have been involved with Tech Trek for years.

Estelle Shiroma, Candidate for Board Member-at-Large

Estelle joined AAUW in 2013, became a lifetime member in 2017 (after attending an inspiring AAUW national conference in Washington, D.C.), and joined the Legacy Circle in 2019. She is currently a board member-at-large, the branch liaison for the UC Davis AAUW student organization, Tech Trek Davis Branch Coordinator, Spokeswoman co-editor, and an active book group member. For the 2024 UCD Tech Trek camp, Estelle continues to serve as the Volunteer Coordinator and will seek participation from regional branch members to assist with camp setup and breakdown, registration, and daily events. During the 2024-25 year, she wants to maintain her role as branch



liaison to the AAUW UCD students with assistance from other branch members. She believes that if we can engage students in learning about AAUW's work and mission to achieve gender equality in education and economic security, we can grow our younger membership. Her other interests are diversity, equity, and inclusion and maintaining our branch affiliation with the United Nations Association (UNA)-USA, Davis Chapter.

Estelle has an academic background in public health (environmental health), environmental science, and engineering. She is an environmental consultant in the private sector with a specialization in human health and ecological risk assessment. In addition to the AAUW Davis branch board, Estelle serves on the boards of two nonprofit organizations and is a scientific advisory board member for a nonprofit foundation.

Annual Business Meeting and Board Member Election on April 15 Continued

Verena Borton, Candidate for Board Member-at-Large



I grew up in the Netherlands and have also lived in Mexico, Ethiopia, and the Philippines. Davis has been home since 1977. I taught English as a Second Language grades K-6 at North Davis Elementary until 2004 and continue my 36+ year role as weaving instructor at Davis Arts Center. I joined AAUW in 2012 and as a board member, I function as the liaison to the local chapter of the United Nations Association, UNA-USA Davis (AAUW is one of the original NGOs present at the signing of the UN Charter in San Francisco in 1945). Over the years, our AAUW branch has co-sponsored many Davis UNA programs for the annual International Women's Day and United Nations Day, while also supporting the local UNA chapter's traditional Human Rights Day celebration. I'm a regular attendee at our monthly Book Group and Celebrate the Nineteenth gatherings.

Laleh Rastegarzadeh, Candidate for Board Member-at-Large

In 2018, I was introduced to Davis AAUW by my friend, Ms. Shahla Farahnak. The amazing women in AAUW taught me that an activist at heart can become a leader and influencer in society. I am motivated by the strong women who have been fighting for women's equity and empowerment at any capacity in the community. As a board member-at-large, I am focusing on partnerships with other organizations such as the United Nations Association-U.S.A. (UNA-USA) and Rotary clubs to create a synergy for achieving our common goals.



I am an environmental engineer working for the State Water Resources Control Board. I am passionate about protecting and enjoying nature, and inclusive cultural events. I am also a board member of UNA-USA, Davis Sunset Rotary, Sahaya International, and InspireTech.

Annual Business Meeting and Board Member Election on April 15 Continued

Shahla Daraghi-Farahnak, Candidate for Board Member-at-Large



I have a master's degree in Chemical Engineering from UC Davis. In October of 2021, I retired from the State Water Resources Control Board after thirty years of state service.

I joined AAUW in January 2014 and over these years as a member, co-executive officer, president, and a board member-at-large I have been inspired by our members and the dedication of our board members. I value and support our annual sponsorship of several TechTrek campers. Another highlight for me has been the annual inter-branch luncheons and the opportunity to hear the very accomplished AAUW scholarship recipients share their stories and accomplishments.

I look forward to being part of another exciting and rewarding year for the Davis branch, and I am passionate about supporting and mentoring members of our UC Davis student organization.

Tech Trek Update

Ten 7th-grade girls were nominated by math and science teachers from Davis Junior High Schools (Harper, Holmes, Da Vinci, and Davis School for Independent Study) to apply for scholarships provided by the Davis Branch to attend the AAUW Tech Trek Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) camp. The girls successfully completed online applications and will be interviewed on April 9 and 11 by Stephanie DeGraff-Hunt, Rhonda Reed, and Juliana Wells. Four successful applicants will each receive a \$1,100 scholarship to attend the Tech Trek camp that will be held at UC Davis from July 14 through July 20, 2024. The scholarship recipients will be announced at the Annual Business Meeting on April 15.

Recap of March 9 Book Group Discussion

A historical fiction novel titled “North Woods” by Daniel Mason was discussed on March 9. Joining the discussion were Karen Lemcke, Verena Borton, Stephanie DeGraff-Hunt, Barbara Durst, Carolyn Van Hoecke, Rhonda Reed, and Estelle Shiroma. The focus of the novel is a yellow house in the woods of western Massachusetts that is inhabited by a succession of colorful occupants over four centuries. The story encompasses American history, as well as natural history. Apples and apple orchards are a recurring theme as the property and its inhabitants change over time. For some of the characters in the book, the house is a place of refuge and inspiration, but for others, it is a place of captivity. A range of human behaviors is associated with the house, from love to murder and mental illness.

Some found the book thought-provoking as we discussed our own homes and its previous residents. Rhonda’s historic home in old East Davis was built in the 1920s and provided housing for numerous UC Davis students, including a former Davis mayor. After moving into her home near campus, Karen discovered that the backyard had been the wedding site of friends. The book also talked about the house as one of the character’s locus amoenus, an idyllic location. Estelle shared that her childhood home in Hawaii is such a place where she has happy memories of her family sailing on weekends. Barbara appreciates wherever she lives as her locus amoenus.

On April 13, the book group discussed “Pelosi” by Molly Ball. The next three books selected are “Absolution” by Alice McDermott (May), “The Women” by Kristin Hannah (June), and “The Bohemians” by Yasmin Darznik (July).

The book group meets on the second Saturday of every month at 9 am by Zoom. All are invited, even if you haven’t read the book. Contact Karen Lemcke at lemckekaren@yahoo.com for more information.

March Celebrate the 19th

By Stephanie DeGraff-Hunt, Davis Branch President

On March 26th, instead of our usual monthly Celebrate the 19th, the Davis and Woodland AAUW branches had a late afternoon gathering in the Woodland Bel Air Market Community Room located behind the floral section. Barbara, Juliana, and Verena were there early to help decorate the room and make it cozy. We dolled up the room with tablecloths, flowers, and lots of good eats and drinks. As people dropped in, the conversations flowed. It was a real treat to meet Woodland members Gwendolyn, Heidi, and Valerie, whom I had not met before. Dual Woodland-Davis members Juliana and Barbara, and Carolyn rounded out the Woodland members. Shahla and Gail drove in together from Winters and Estelle, Cathy, and Karen came in from Davis. It was just lovely to have time to get to know each other. I sincerely hope that our new Woodland friends will feel welcome to join the Davis branch as members when the Woodland branch disbands. Plans are already in motion to have another get-together soon.



***Woodland and Davis Branch gathering on March 26.
(Photo by Shahla)***



Davis and Woodland Branch members engage in lively conversation.

UNA Update on March events

Gathered by Verena Borton

The Davis UNA chapter's March 10 event celebrating **2024 International Women's Day** in person at International House provided an inspiring afternoon focused on quality education for women and girls and gender equality, two prime criteria in AAUW's mission. Rather than presenting generalities, the program featured a local nonprofit's founder and director, Elke Damesyn, describing the challenging work of the [Institute for English Literacy](#) that provides instruction in English and computer literacy via the internet to women and girls in Afghanistan where the Taliban forbids them access to education.

The audience was actively engaged in a lengthy Q & A segment, handled with specific details by Elke and her assistant Wadia who facilitates the translations from and into Dari. A very well-designed set of slides and videos provided additional visual clarification about the daunting task of linking this local endeavor with a group of women and girls eager for learning and compassion halfway around the world.



Following are a few attendees' impressions of the program:

“The event was very inspiring. Elke’s presentation on efforts to provide education to girls in Afghanistan highlighted the importance of never giving up on a good cause, no matter how hard the circumstances. The very active participation of the audience during the Q & A session also reflected that many people here in Davis care, and that gives hope.”

“Many young Afghani women have no hope, no purpose in life, and aren’t allowed education. They cannot travel outside the home unless accompanied by a male. Many marry young. But having no other goal than raising a child is challenging to intellect and outlook – thus much depression fills the surroundings. One job that gives women some freedom is to be a midwife.

UNA Update on March events Continued

Through grants and personal sacrifice, phones, computers and solar panels are given to young women after an interview by Damesyn. Connections seem to be the major reason for IEL's success. The organization's numbers keep increasing through intense mentoring and success."

"In the midst of what history might come to classify as gender apartheid and a crime against humanity, Afghan women have been deprived of many of their rights, including education. In resilience and resistance to these repressions, the Institute for English Literacy provides a human-centered approach composed of emotional support, mentoring and English classes taught via online chat to women at home on their phone. To encourage these women throughout the many traumas, challenges and risks, learning milestones are rewarded with phones, wifi credit, solar panels, batteries and assistance to apply to other educational programs abroad."

"I was particularly pleased to hear comments during the Q & A from two Afghan men in the audience. Their views were a great addition of knowledgeable background information."

"The commitment and dedication of Elke, Wadia, teachers and coordinators to empower women in Afghanistan through education is truly inspiring. The work of the Institute for English Literacy gives me hope that these courageous women can achieve their dreams and goals despite the oppressive conditions under which they live."

"I gave the website a read and I will never complain about studying again; what a sad reality that so many girls do not have the opportunity to do that."

"I would like to make a cosmic-sized acknowledgment to the fearless women who are taking tremendous personal risks to teach young women and girls in Afghanistan who by current decree are not allowed access to education. How can anyone believe that keeping half the population ignorant can have positive results? Kudos to the power of the belief that education matters!! In the excellent program sponsored by the UNA Davis Chapter I learned so much about the dedication of international women living in the United States to teach young Afghani girls. They are to be lifted up to the highest aspirations of human dignity."

UNA wishes to thank the Davis branch of AAUW for co-sponsorship and attendance.

Annual Commission on the Status of Women – CSW68

The two-week session is the largest UN gathering on gender equality. CSW68 brought together world leaders - including two Heads of State, three vice-presidents and more than 100 Ministers – plus 4,800 representatives of civil society organizations. Alongside CSW68, approximately 270 side events were organized by UN Member States, intergovernmental organizations and UN entities, while more than 760 parallel events were organized by civil society and youth-led organizations as part of the NGO CSW68 Forum.

UNA Update on March events Continued

The **Youth Forum** featured more than 400 young leaders from across the globe, ranging from activists to experts with a rich diversity of experiences. The inclusion of adolescents, young people with disabilities, indigenous youth, LGBTIQ+ youth and more, added depth to the dialogue on poverty eradication and galvanizing efforts to push forward for gender equity. The Forum stood as a beacon for young voices ready to echo through the halls of global decision-making. **“It is high time that we stop thinking about you as the leaders of tomorrow and start working with you as the leaders of today”**, said UN Women Executive Director Sima Bahous.

At the end of the March 11 - 22 68th session of the Commission on the Status of Women at the UN, the CSW delivered commitments by UN Member States to strengthen financing and institutions to eradicate women’s and girls’ poverty. The outcome document recognizes that women and girls living in poverty become “shock absorbers” in times of crisis, and that **further efforts are needed to increase resources to address women’s and girls’ poverty.**

Globally, 10.3% of women live in extreme poverty today, according to the report presented by UN Secretary General António Guterres to the Commission. **Progress toward ending poverty needs to be 26 times faster if we are to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.**

Acknowledging that the international financial architecture is not fit for a crisis-prone world, the Commission called for reforms to enable countries to mobilize and invest resources in gender equality. These measures include debt relief and progressive taxation and **ensuring that public resources are allocated to address the needs and rights of women and girls.**

Women’s Economic Empowerment (essential to achieving gender equality and women’s rights) Index score: .607 – meaning that globally women are only empowered to achieve 60% of their full potential. It is estimated that closing the gender gap could give the global economy a USD 7 trillion boost.

CURRENT STATUS OF WOMEN:

- 1 in every 10 women is living in extreme poverty
- Women are less likely than men to have access to social protection
- Women are more food insecure than men
- Women and girls suffer most from the dearth of safely managed water and sanitation
- Women are less likely than men to have access to financial institutions or have bank accounts
- The digital divide remains gendered

Much of this information was gleaned from the UN Women website.

UNA Update on March events Continued

Congress finally passes FY24 Appropriations

At long last, all appropriations for FY24 (which started on October 1, 2023 and only lasts through September 2024) were passed and signed in late March. While the threatened House bill with a 83% cut to Contributions to International Organizations and zeroing out funding for the UN regular budget thankfully did not pass, International Affairs got a significant 6% (\$3.46 billion) cut, reflecting the overwhelming distaste in Congress for spending abroad, and domestic programs taking precedence over international affairs spending.

The final budget includes a total prohibition for any funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) until March 2025.

The Peacekeeping spending cap of 25% remains, meaning that the U.S. will keep adding to arrears that already are at over \$ 1 billion.

Funding for UNICEF and UNFPA remains the same as in FY2023, while UNDP got a slight increase. Overall, there is a decrease in funding for global health programs.



UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Davis Chapter

AAUW National News

AAUW National Election

The annual AAUW national election is underway. Cast your ballot from April 3rd to noon on May 15th.

How to Vote: On April 3rd members with an email address on file with AAUW National received a ballot via secure email. The sender's name is AAUW (with the email address vote@simplyvoting.com). The subject line is AAUW Election 2024. If you need to find this email, search by the subject "AAUW Election 2024". The email contains your unique Elector ID and Password to vote. Voters will receive regular reminders if they have not yet voted. Voters without a valid email address on file with AAUW National will be mailed a paper ballot.

AAUW National News Continued

Key Issue on the Ballot: AAUW members are being asked to consider a proposed national bylaws amendment to eliminate the degree requirement for AAUW membership. The amendment was proposed to fully open membership to anyone who supports AAUW's work. The intent is to align our practices with our mission for equity. The AAUW California Board of Directors voted unanimously to support a Yes vote on the amendment. See the [FAQs](#) posted on the AAUW California website. They address some of the questions AAUW California members have posed to educate themselves about the proposal.

The AAUW bylaws state that an affirmative (yes) vote of two-thirds of the eligible votes cast is required to amend the bylaws. Voting to 'abstain' does not count as a vote for or against.

If passed, changes to the bylaws will be effective immediately and will impact branch and state bylaws. A new bylaws template for affiliates will be available immediately after the vote.

Open Membership Q&A Session

Learn about the upcoming member vote on candidates for the national AAUW Board of Directors and on a bylaws amendment to [open membership](#) to all who believe in AAUW's mission of equity for all.

A Q&A Session was held on April 2nd. The webinar can be viewed [HERE](#) when it is posted.

AAUW Priorities in the 2024 U.S. Election

As part of our [It's My Vote! 2024 voter engagement campaign](#), let's dive into the policy issues at stake in this year's national elections, including pay equity, equity in education, reproductive rights, and the Equal Rights Amendment. Learn how AAUW members can engage in local voter education efforts on Wednesday, April 17 at 4 pm (7 pm ET). Register for this webinar [HERE](#).

AAUW's Impact in 2023: Read the Report

In the face of persistent challenges hindering women's progress, AAUW stood unwavering, advocating for gender equity in 2023. Despite enduring discrimination and disproportionate burdens, particularly affecting women and girls of color, AAUW members actively engaged in advocacy, sent messages to legislators, and championed legislative change on Capitol Hill.

Learn more about some of the organizational achievements that you can share with your members and supporters by reading [AAUW's 2023 Year in Review](#) now on our website.

AAUW California News

Back to School at AAUW's Annual Event

Find out what's happening in the hallways of AAUW California. Join the state leadership team for a campus tour, classroom visits, rah-rah assemblies, and awards to star pupils. Learn what AAUW California is doing for your branch. View the winning Speech Trek and Gov Trek videos. Learn who was awarded Branch Activity of the Year and State Named Gift Honoree. Then choose an elective for extra study in breakout rooms. Warning: there may be pop quizzes!

The webinar will be held on Saturday, April 27th from 9 am to noon via Zoom. Registration is required. Click [HERE](#) for more information and to register.

Gov Trek Results

If you joined us Saturday, March 16th, for the virtual 2024 Gov Trek Campaign Competition, you know which student campaign team won the highly-contested 2024 Gov Trek mock election competition: Team *Vote Eliana*. This team includes four high school girls from San Ramon, two from Roseville-South, and one from Santa Cruz County. Congratulations to the members of those communities and these up-and-coming leaders!! Team members will receive internships and awards.

All Gov Trek graduates will receive awards and certificates of completion. We are so proud to support their leadership aspirations! Watch the Gov Trek Finale and Campaign Competition recording and share it with your branch members [HERE](#).

Say hello to all of our Gov Trek 2024 superstars. To view each campaign video, click the team name.

- Grand Prize: [Vote Eliana](#)
- Best Candidate Speech: [Gov Trek Girlies](#)
- Best Campaign Management: [Melissa 4 Riverside](#)
- Best Campaign Ad & Flier: [Abby for Senate](#)

BE AS ACTIVE AS YOU CAN, BUT STAY A MEMBER!

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