



Northwoods News - December 2022

MESSAGE FROM OUR CO-PRESIDENTS ANDREA AND LINDA

It's hard to believe that December is here – and snow has arrived! The holidays are upon us – what a great time of year. That means that our AAUW Holiday Celebration is right around the corner. Please join us on Tuesday, December 13, at 5:30 at the GEL for dinner, business meeting, and our back-by-demand silent auction and bucket raffle! A wide array of items will be available including wonderful gifts for Christmas (or maybe yourself) and delicious baked goods. There will be plenty of time to visit with other members, meet new members (we have quite a few!), and raise money for scholarships.

And because of the generosity of our awesome branch members, we have extra funds in our branch bank account to increase scholarship funding this fiscal year! During the December branch business meeting, we will be asking you to approve a revised budget which increases the scholarship budget to \$4,380, up from the current budget of \$1,950. Exciting!

As a part of our AAUW branch's "Awareness ... Then Change" initiative in collaboration with Ely EMPOWER, we hosted Dani Pieratos of the Bois Forte Band of Chippewa at Tuesday Group on November 22. Dani gave a heartfelt and moving presentation about the need to build a local food system in the Bois Forte community to provide healthy, locally grown food to residents -- and the challenges to overcome. At the start of the presentation, Public Policy Tri-Chair Mary Setterholm read an acknowledgement that we are on the homelands of the Lake Superior Bands of Ojibwe people and within the ceded lands of the Treaty of 1854.

A big thank you to members who responded to the Interest Survey sent out a couple of weeks ago. We have SO many talented women in our branch. We'll use your indicated interests and contact you when the need comes up to see if you want to help! It takes a lot of hands to accomplish our branch goals and initiatives. It's not too late to respond to the Interest Survey.

And several of you commented on the fun and entertaining "Women in Music" program at the last branch meeting. Thank you to Jean Gendreau, Maria Homer, and AAUW member, Sally Koski, for their musical performance and lesson about women composers over time including local composers. And Jean Gendreau joined our branch after the meeting. Welcome, Jean!

Hope to see you on December 13 for our Holiday Celebration!

Andrea and Linda

CALENDAR OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS

Join us for the December meeting and holiday event!

BRANCH MEETINGS for 2022-2023 are as follows:

December 13th – Holiday Celebration
- Silent Auction, Dinner

January 10th – TBD
- Jan Guerin leading a book discussion OR Planned Parenthood speaker

February 14th – Keys to Happiness
- Autumn Cole

March 14th – TBD
- Jan Guerin leading a book discussion OR Planned Parenthood speaker

April 11th – Annual Meeting
- No program

May 8th - End of the Year Meeting
- Banquet, Silent Auction

Program Committee: Sally Koski, Peggy Stolley, Sue Peterson

BOARD MEETINGS are held the fourth Monday of the month.

NEXT PUBLIC POLICY MEETING:

Tuesday, December 6

4:30 pm

Boathouse

PUBLIC POLICY

AAUW Ely, Public Policy Committee

By Mary Setterholm

Time for an Equal Rights Amendment in the Minnesota Constitution

Nevadans just passed the most comprehensive Equal Rights Amendment in the nation, with 58% of voters saying "Yes" to "adding language to the Nevada Constitution that prohibits the denial or abridgment of rights on account of an individual's race, color, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, disability, ancestry or national origin." This makes Nevada the 27th state in the nation to do so. Yet an Associated Press report says the effort is mostly symbolic? ("[Nevada passes sweeping version of Equal Rights Amendment](#)," November 10, 2022)

Hardly.

Not that we have anything against symbols. The flag is a symbol that people have fought and died for; the cross is a symbol that many worship; the ring on one's fourth left finger symbolizes lifelong commitment. And the ERA symbolizes equality for all. And it protects against discrimination on the basis of sex and gender.

But it goes deeper than that. The 2022 election results across the country and in Minnesota show that the majority of voters support democracy, freedom and inclusive legal rights for all people. Just look at the multiple states that proposed, voted and passed amendments to their state constitutions to protect reproductive freedom: Vermont by 76%, Michigan 58%, and California by 65%. Kentucky and Montana voters rejected amendments that would have allowed restrictions to abortion. Earlier this year, Kansas voters also overwhelmingly rejected ending abortion protections.

[All of these votes show that a clear majority of voters in the United States believe in the inalienable right to everyone's bodily autonomy.](#)

The recent election results in Minnesota made history. For the first time, Minnesotans elected a pro-reproductive freedom majority to both legislative chambers. This means that Minnesota now has

a trifecta in our state legislature, offering a lot of opportunity to push for some great policies, including a clear path for the Equal Rights Amendment to be added to our state constitution.

On Tuesday, January 3, the first day of the legislative session, ERAMN is planning a Rally at the Capitol. The plan is to meet at 11:30 a.m. for Capitol Action and Legislator visits. Following that, we will gather in the Capitol Rotunda for our ERA Rally at 1:15 p.m. We welcome all partners/allies to join us.

We are excited and planning for an Ely Branch presence at this year's Rally at the Capitol, called #Day1forERA, for the first day of the legislative session on Tuesday, January 3, 2023, with bill authors and supporters. AAUW MN will have a table at the event, and it would be wonderful to have a visible coalition at the rally. The plan is to meet at 11:30 a.m. for Capitol Action and Legislator visits. Following that, we will gather in the Capitol Rotunda for our ERA Rally at 1:15 p.m.

Some may go for the day and some may go on Monday for a night in a hotel before the rally. If you are interested in attending, please let Pam, Jessica, or Mary know!

FUNDRAISING



Join us for the Christmas party on December 13! We will have both a silent auction and bucket raffle and, of course, lots of fabulous door prizes!

For those of you who have not participated in a bucket raffle, we will have a variety of packages with a dish in front of each. You buy raffle tickets and deposit them in the dishes of the items you hope to win.

Purchases can be made with cash, check or credit card. You can finish your Christmas shopping here or purchase some goodies to share with friends and family. We encourage you to bring guests whether they are potential members or not. This is one of our major events to raise money for scholarships, STEM education, voter education and pay equity activities.

Thank you to everyone who donated items for this event.

MEMBERSHIP

If someone you are talking to someone who wants to join AAUW and you don't have a membership form, tell them to Google – AAUW Ely MN, then click on the site.

On our webpage, they can click on the membership form. They can print it out and mail it in with a check.

Kay can be reached at 218-235-6102 or khv771@gmail.com.

LET'S TALK ABOUT: FREE SPEECH, HATE SPEECH, AND THE KKK FLIERS

By Anna Heil

The month of November, a time in many households dedicated to gratitude and holiday spirit, had a disgusting and hateful start in northern Minnesota as residents in Babbitt found KKK literature on their doorstep with a disturbing anti-immigrant, white supremacist message. Unfortunately, this instance of racist fliers distribution is not isolated—neighborhoods across the U.S. are reckoning with how to combat a growing culture of propaganda that seeks to divide, isolate, and intimidate our communities. In a period when such rhetoric is becoming more and more mainstream, many of us wonder—what can be done?

From a legal standpoint, the reality is not much. The distribution of fliers, pamphlets, and leaflets is protected by our nation's (arguably most important) right, whose underlying principle is that "the government may not prohibit the expression of an idea simply because society finds the idea itself offensive or disagreeable." *Texas v. Johnson*, 491 U.S. 397 (1999). But what about hate speech? Unlike many other countries, who have extensive anti-hate speech rules, our First Amendment right protects against the prohibition of any speech, no matter how heinous. There are instances of exception, when categories of speech like obscenity or defamation can be outlawed. There is speech which invokes violence or an immediate disruption of peace (for example, a leaflet that calls for lynching or gang violence.). These are referred to as "fighting words" and can be used to prosecute in specific instances, but ultimately don't hold up as justification for banning certain categories of speech. For example, in *R.V.A. v. City of St. Paul, Minn.*, 505 U.S. 377 (1992), a juvenile was prosecuted after allegedly burning a cross on a black family's lawn in St. Paul. He was charged with violation of a city ordinance that prohibited display of a symbol which "arouses anger, alarm or resentment in others on the basis of race, color, creed, religion or gender." The Supreme Court assumed that this ordinance was designed to regulate only "fighting words," but still held the ordinance to be unconstitutional because it solely targeted speech that was racially motivated, and not speech that targeted other groups of people. The precedent has been set to protect free speech, so any Babbitt ordinance banning the distribution of hate speech particularly would likely not hold up to a challenge.

So banning specific types of fliers is not a legally strong move. What about households that don't want any fliers, regardless of content? Could ALL fliers be banned? Likely not. In *Lovell v. City of Griffin*, 303 U.S. 444 (1938) the Court struck down a permit system applying to the distribution of circulars, handbills, or literature of any kind. The First Amendment, the Court said, "necessarily embraces pamphlets and leaflets. These indeed have been historic weapons in the defense of liberty, as the pamphlets of Thomas Paine and others in our own history abundantly attest." More recently, the Ninth Circuit has invalidated an anti-littering ordinance which prohibited leaving leaflets on car windshields expressing views on immigration policy. Courts have generally been supportive of the right to distribute fliers, addressing the historical importance of pamphleteering as a

vehicle for disseminating ideas—especially religious ideas. “The hand distribution of religious tracts is ages old and has the same claim as more orthodox practices to the guarantees of freedom of religion, speech and the press.” *Watchtower Bible & Tract Soc. of N. Y., Inc. v. Village of Stratton* (00-1737) 536 U.S. 150 (2002). How many reading this now have been a part of political or social movements that relied on door-to-door canvassing (perhaps even within the last few months?) However, the Courts have consistently upheld an individual’s right to post a “no solicitation” sign on their door and then enforce that—the key difference being that this would not be a government enforcing a restriction based on content, but an individual saying “stay off my land!”

So is that the solution? Rely on individuals filtering out all pamphlets and ideas because of the ignorant (albeit dangerous) actions of the few, designed to intimidate? Perhaps instead of relying on the legal system to govern and punish, we should look to each other as neighbors and community members to embrace and love one another. Counter speech with speech—create fliers that insist upon our pro-multicultural, pro-diversity beliefs, banners that welcome newcomers, or slogans, rallies, and yard signs that announce how the majority of our community stands against the hate the KKK and others are trying to spread. Most importantly, we must continue to back up that speech with real, loving action—provide mutual aid, community engagement, social activism, and financial support—in the end, that is more powerful than words anyway.