



THE PINE
WINTER 2025

FROM THE DESK OF KELSEY WAITS, PRESIDENT

“How are you doing?” It’s a simple enough question that we’ve been programmed to ask one another at social gatherings, but it’s a question that I’ve struggled to answer each time it’s been posed to me over the last few weeks. Given AAUW’s long history of political activism, I imagine that many of you feel the same way. 2025 has been chaotic, to say the least. This is true if we’re talking about the federal government, or even if we’re just talking Minnesota politics. It’s enough to overwhelm even our most politically active members.

Over the past month, I’ve received a lot of questions about what our organization is doing to push back against the harmful policies that are being proposed and passed at the different levels of government. As a non-partisan organization, we cannot oppose or support specific candidates for office. We can, however, take positions on policy. As AAUW-MN President, I am meeting with branch presidents monthly to answer their questions and help branches connect with one another. I am also continuing to build relationships with other organizations including ERA MN, MN Now, and League of Women Voters. I am looking for ways to engage and increase our visibility as an advocacy organization.

Change is not easy. It takes time and grueling effort. This political moment is no different, but AAUW is as committed as ever to our values and removing the barriers that stand in the way of gender equity. If there are advocacy efforts that you would like the state board to take, please consider introducing a resolution at our state meeting. This will help the board know where branches want our advocacy efforts to be focused. If you have any questions, send me an email or reach out to Jan Carey and we’d be happy to help.

Remember to mark your calendars for the Annual Meeting. It will be taking place on April 25 and 26 in Austin, MN. There is a lot of great planning being done and it is sure to be a fun weekend. Until then, stay warm and remember to take care of yourself.

Kelsey

AAUW MINNESOTA STATE MEETING
April 25-26, 2025
Austin Country Club/Hormel Institute, Austin, MN
“ Cultivating Hope Through History”

Greetings from Spamtown USA!

The Austin Branch of AAUW is looking forward to welcoming you to our town on April 25th and 26th for the AAUW Minnesota State Meeting. We have a busy two days planned for you. The main hotel is the Double Tree by Hilton. We will have members in the lobby starting at noon to provide information. Registration packets will be available at the Austin Country Club beginning at 4:30 and again on Saturday morning at the Hormel Institute.

On Friday afternoon, self-paced tours are available at the Spam Museum (corner of 101 3rd Ave NE and Main St.) and Hormel Historic Home (208 4th Ave NW) (the former home of



George A. Hormel). Sweet Reads Bookstore

<https://www.sweetreadsbooks.com> across from the Spam Museum and owned by one of our members – is also looking forward to welcoming you. We will have members of our branch in all three locations as resources. If you choose to have dessert and coffee/lemonade at the Hormel Home, there is a \$5.00 charge. You can pay for it when you register. When you arrive, we will have a list at the site, so no ticket is necessary.

The official conference begins at 5:00 p.m. on Friday at the Austin Country Club. There will be a cash bar and time to socialize. Dinner will be served at 6:00 p.m. The highlight of Friday evening will be a presentation by one of our members, who will portray Gertrude Ellis Skinner, who is officially recognized as a pillar of Austin and was a woman ahead of her time. We will hear in her own words about some of her adventures on her worldwide travels in the late 1800s. On Saturday, check-in for Silent Auction items and breakfast will begin at 7:30 at the Hormel Institute, a world-renowned cancer research facility. The day will include the official annual



business meeting and a keynote address. There will be time for bidding on the Silent Auction and networking with State Board members on specific topics and visiting with members from other branches. After lunch, we will hear from a Hormel Institute scientist and tour the multi-million-dollar Hormel Institute, a branch of the University of Minnesota's cancer research division.

We look forward to hosting you in Austin!

Sue Grove, President

AAUW Austin Branch

REGISTRATION FORM IS ON PAGE 9 & AT AAUW MN STATE WEBSITE

KEYNOTE SPEAKER MARY CATHRYN RICKER

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE ALBERT SHANKER INSTITUTE



She is a National Board Certified middle school English/language arts teacher who has served as Minnesota's Commissioner of Education, as Executive vice-president of the American Federation of Teachers, and as president of the Saint Paul Federation of Teachers, Local 28. Prior to her leadership outside of the classroom, Ricker was a classroom teacher for 13 years in Minnesota, Washington State, and South Korea.

As Commissioner of Education, Mary Cathryn Ricker lead a school finance working group examining Minnesota's school finance systems and

recommending reforms. She advocated for a more student and family facing department of education, resulting in increased direct outreach including translated materials and translation services. Additionally, Ricker worked alongside advocates in the effort for legislation for Indigenous Education for All, ethnic studies, credit attainment for students experiencing housing instability or homelessness, expanding social/emotional learning, strengthening teacher diversity efforts, including cultural competency in teacher and principal evaluations and non-exclusionary discipline policies—winning a prohibition on public preschool suspensions and dismissals in a special legislative session. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Ricker lead an effort to act on the science, create safe and healthy learning conditions, and prioritize in-person learning by establishing localized learning models, listening and responding to the community—including building MDE's most ambitious and diverse family-facing communication work—providing statewide professional development in meeting the needs of students with special needs, students experiencing housing instability, students learning English as a new language,

and Black, Indigenous, and students of color, and investing in necessary health and safety items like technology, protective equipment, and COVID testing.

When Mary Cathryn was executive vice-president of the AFT, under the leadership of AFT President Randi Weingarten, she created and lead the AFT Professionalism Task Force and organized the AFT Gun Violence Prevention Advisory Committee. Ricker also lead the AFT Innovation Fund, focusing on expanding and supporting career and technical education and full-service community schools. Additionally, she coordinated local, state and national unions support for refugee children at the border, lead involvement in ethnic studies movement, advocated and organized for comprehensive immigration reform and for strengthening education for English language learners. She organized a member/staff working group for Native American advocacy and represented AFT in professional membership work, including as Program and Policy Council division liaison.

As president of the Saint Paul Federation of Teachers, Ricker pioneered the concept of bargaining for the common good, an approach to negotiating where union members share the power they have at the negotiating table with students, families, and community members to negotiate around a set of demands that benefit members, students, and the broader community. She lead the effort to win contract language such as citizenship leave and a school nurse for every child, and she championed innovative, teacher-built solutions that improve teaching and learning as well as strengthen public education. These include the union's alternative teacher recruitment and licensure program, CareerTeacher; a full-spectrum peer assistance and review program; site-based school redesign and governance; a parent-teacher home visit project; comprehensive professional development; paraprofessional pathways to teaching, dedicated paraprofessional professional development; and meaningful community engagement as the union's work.

She also serves on the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards board of directors. Her teaching and leadership have been recognized with a number of other honors, including receiving the Education Minnesota Peterson-Schaubach Outstanding Leadership Award, qualifying as a semifinalist for the NEA Foundation Award for Teaching Excellence, and serving as a featured contributor in the Annenberg Foundation's national professional development series "Write in the Middle." She has spoken and written extensively about teaching and learning, professionalism, and human rights issues and her work has appeared in local and national publications. She has traveled to speak, teach, or study public education, the labor movement, and democracy, including in Europe, North and South America, and Western Asia/the Arabian Peninsula.

A native of Hibbing, Minnesota, she earned her undergraduate degree in English with a mathematics minor at the University of Saint Thomas and completed graduate work in Teacher Leadership at the University of Minnesota.

From the Desk of Jan Carey, VP Public Policy

Resolutions - As we ready for the AAUW MN Annual meeting, the Resolutions Committee has encouraged branch members to submit Resolutions for the Annual Meeting. We write and pass a resolution because it is a formal document that makes a statement about an issue or honors someone or group that is so important that AAUW-MN wants to have a record of it. A resolution strengthens public policy priorities as well. An archived list of Resolutions passed by AAUW MN members is included here. Contact me (jmcfree@aol.com) for additional information and deadlines.

The State of our Mission. The fire alarms are blaring quite loudly. It's time to come to the aid of all Americans and put out the fires or at least control them. I recently used this analogy in a Public Policy update to branch leaders. Using the procedures applied by forest fighters, each and every one of us can develop local advocacy initiatives, events, and conduct two-minute activist initiatives.

Select an Executive Order and use the firefighter's strategy.

1. Suppress the fire - reset your personal FB settings, notifications, ads, etc. Read what you want to read; not what an algorithm has designed for you.
2. Establish control lines - the boundaries that must be employed to control how and where the issue will spread. Repeat #1.
3. Flank - Firefighters begin their assault on the blaze from behind. Thus, attend city or county council meetings and school board meetings. Know their agendas. Is there anything on the agenda that threatens an AAUW public policy priority? Understand the issues - individual or group research of the issues; learn both sides; act accordingly.
4. Prevent the fire. Know the issues and report them to members frequently and with commitment. Be prepared to mitigate issues through the media, at speaking engagements, on social media platforms.

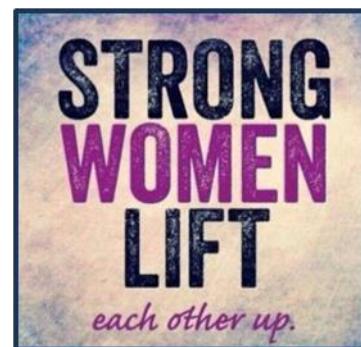
AAUW National: the strength of advocacy

My monthly SPPC (State Public Policy Committee) meetings with AAUW National staff are highly informative. The following is a recap from AAUW National staff and provided to you to practice advocacy in your community.

National Update & Discussion

Meghan Kissell, Senior Director of Policy and Member Advocacy, provided a federal update and discussion touched on executive orders, higher education and the Dept. of Ed., pay equity, Title IX, transgender rights, and the ERA.

- National Women's Law Center: "How schools can take steps to effectively address sexual harassment while complying with the Trump Title IX rule." We'll share more partner resources on protecting students under the 2020 Title IX rules as they're developed.



- See statement by Sen. Gillibrand (D-NY) and statement by American Constitution Society on the ERA.
- AAUW-CALIFORNIA is developing a Q&A guide to help people respond to common Qs about transgender issues, transmisogyny and misogyny this spring. Please feel free to reach out to California state public policy chairs Amy Hom and Missy

FROM THE DESK OF KAREN KIRKWOOD, VP PROGRAM

With the State Meeting coming up soon, I want to remind you that the deadlines for State Grants and Awards are also coming up soon.

NCCWSL - There is still time for Branches to choose either a High School or College student to attend the annual National Conference for College Women Student Leaders (NCCWSL, pronounced “nickwhistle”). The dates this year are May 28-30 at The University of Maryland, College Park. Unfortunately, that is all the information we have so far. There is no registration for or schedule available yet. We have seven branches that are planning to send someone. The State offers \$1000 to each Branch (up to 10 branches) that sends a student. Although the Jan. 30 deadline has passed, and since we don’t have registration materials yet, the deadline for award applications will be ignored this year. If we receive more than 10 applications, they will be awarded in the order that we receive the notice of intent. The first seven branches will essentially be automatically awarded, as long as their candidate actually registers, and we receive copies of their applications. Send applications to karenskirkwood@cs.com.

AAUW MN Young :Women for Equity Awards – these awards are available for 2 young women. The first is for a high school student. That is for \$500.00. The second is for a college student (up to age 25). That is for \$1,000.00. Applications are due on or before March 31, 2025. We would like to give the awards in person, if possible, at the State Meeting on April 26, 2025. The awardees will be asked to explain their project at this time. Please see the qualifying criteria on page 6 of the Strategic Plan in the “Helping our Branches” information. Application forms are included after the criteria. We are hoping to receive several applications this year, as we did last year.

Strategic Action Plan Grants - Finally, we are looking forward to awarding a \$500.00 Strategic Plan Action Grant to each branch that plans to present an Equity-focused event in the coming year. Applications for this Grant are due by March 30, 2025. Information about last year’s grants were included in the booklet from the 2024 State Meeting.

I encourage all Branches to submit applications for the above Grants in order to move AAUW toward our goal of Equity for All!

Candidates for President Elect (Lisa West- Hastings), VP Program (Karen Reichensperger-Ely) and Treasurer (Beth Nienow-Rochester). VP Public Policy and 2025-2026 Nominating Committee positions are still open.

FROM THE DESK OF BARB WONSON LIUKKONEN, AAUW FUNDS VP

Silent Auction at our State Meeting - Come and bid on wonderful items during the silent auction that will be held at our state meeting in Austin on April 25-26. Proceeds from the auction will be split between AAUW's Education and Training Fund, Leadership Fund, and Economic Security Fund.

Branches are encouraged to bring new, creative, fun items for the auction. Baskets of books, gardening supplies, or tasty local treats are very popular, as are handmade gifts such as quilts, sweaters, art work or pottery. Event tickets or other opportunities are also welcomed. Your branch will receive AAUW Funds credit for the amount that your item raises.

While you may use your credit card, we hope that you'll bring your checkbook or cash to cover items you bid on. This year we will be asking those who want to use their credit cards to cover the cost of fees. This year, we will also be asking bidders to write their checks to AAUW MN; they will all be cashed here and we will send a single check to the National Office for all the funds raised during the auction. That should shorten the time waiting for your checks to clear. The auction will be held on Saturday, April 26. High bidders will be able to settle up and pick up their 'swag' that afternoon before the end of the meeting. Branch Funds Chairs will be hearing more from me asking about what items they are bringing and with instructions on when to have them ready for set-up.

Come ready to be wowed and ready to bid! I can't wait to see those polite battles that are often waged over that perfect basket of picnic fixings or the stash of mystery books, wine and crackers that everybody seems to want. Thanks for your support of AAUW Funds.

NOMINATIONS FOR STATE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE



President Elect nominee is Lisa West- Hastings

VP Program nominee is Karen Reichensperger-Ely

Treasurer nominee is Beth Nienow-Rochester

VP Public Policy NEED NOMINEE

2025-2026 Nominating Committee NEED 2 NOMINEES

FROM THE DESK OF SAUNDRA MARTELL, BYLAWS COMMITTEE CHAIR



Update Bylaw - All branches need to have updated Bylaws that incorporate Articles I-VII shown in the model bylaws on the AAUW website by June, 2026 . If your branch has not submitted its revised bylaws, please send them to Sandra Martell, wave34145@gmail.com or 200 Norman Point Rd, NW, Longville, MN 56655.

WHAT BRANCHES ARE DOING

Owatonna, Northfield, and Faribault BRANCHES

Tri-Branch Luncheon at Owatonna Arts Center on April 12. The speaker is Hudda Ibrahim, current St. Cloud City Council member and educator at St. Cloud Technical & Community College in the field of Diversity and Social Justice.

AUSTIN BRANCH

In honor of Women's History Month, the Austin Branch of the AAUW is hosting a presentation on the Equal Rights Amendment at 2pm on Saturday, March 8 at the Austin Public Library.

Suzan Willhite, Co-President of ERA Minnesota, will talk about the amendment, its history, and why equal rights are important for all Minnesotans.

This event is open to the public.

BRAINERD BRANCH

Saturday, March 15, 2025 – 10:30 am. Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Remake, etc.

HASTINGS BRANCH

March 24, 2025 7:00 pm

The State of Dakota County

County Attorney Kathryn Keena



AAUW MINNESOTA ANNUAL MEETING
April 25-26, 2025
Austin Country Club/Hormel Institute, Austin, MN
“ Cultivating Hope Through History”



Registration:

Name (Please print) _____ Phone # _____
Address: _____ City: _____
State: _____ Zip code: _____ Branch: _____
Email: _____

Meeting Information (please check all boxes that apply):

Branch Member [] State Board Member [] College/University Student [] Visitor/Guest []
Member at Large [] Past State President [] College/University Rep [] Legacy Circle []

The Annual State Meeting fee, \$125.00, includes Friday banquet, Saturday breakfast and lunch, and featured speakers.

Please note any dietary restriction here: _____

Payment Options:

Checks are preferred. Registration deadline: MARCH 31, 2025.

Make checks payable to AAUW Austin. Mail the registration form & check to Eileen Chao, 704 – 1st Dr. NW, Apt. 2009, Austin, MN 55912.

Payment via PayPal available using the QR Code provided or searching for the email austinmnaauw@gmail.com.



Book Your Hotel:

DoubleTree by Hilton, Austin - 1701 4th St NW, Austin, MN 55912. (507) 433-1000. Cost: \$129.00 plus tax. Deadline: March 25, 2025, for AAUW rate.

Other Hotels: AmericInn by Wyndham Austin, 1700 8th Street NW, Austin, (507) 301-7472
Cobblestone Hotel & Suites – Austin, 1000 16th Avenue NW, Austin, (507) 433-9797

Optional Friday afternoon tour:

- Hormel Historic Home (includes dessert) \$5.00
Spam Museum
Sweet Reads Bookstore

Total Payment Amount [] \$125 – Registration
(check one) [] \$130 – Registration + Tour
Payment Method [] Check (enclosed)
(check one) [] PayPal