

AAUW NEWS OF NOTE

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Mission Statement: AAUW advances equity for all women and girls through advocacy, education, and research.

Vision Statement: AAUW will be a powerful advocate and visible leader in equity and education through research, philanthropy, and measurable change in critical areas impacting the lives of women and girls.

HINGHAM AREA BRANCH

MARCH 2011

CALENDAR

March 2, Wednesday	Book Group 7:00 PM <u>Let The Great World Spin</u> by Colum McCann Home of Carol Sullivan-Hanley
March 8, Tuesday	Branch Meeting 7:00 PM Hospitals, Healthcare, and Humanity Tufts Library, Broad Street, Weymouth
March 10, Thursday	Adventures in Dining 6:30 PM Stockholders Steak House, Weymouth
March 22, Tuesday	Board Meeting 7:00 PM Home of Sandy Carle
March 24, Thursday	Girls Game Night 7:00 PM Home of Sandy Carle

BRANCH MEETING

I am thrilled to announce that Ali Lutz of Partners In Health will be speaking at the next meeting on March 8th at the Weymouth Library. She will share the history of the organization's good work in Haiti. The founders, Paul Farmer and Ophelia Dahl, mobilized around health issues in the Central Plateau of Haiti in 1983. With funds from a Boston businessman, Thomas White, the small clinic was built and grew. It is now considered PIH's flagship project with 104 beds, two full-service operating rooms, a Red Cross blood bank, and a dozen schools. It is a community-based model that has been training and hiring thousands of community health workers. The vision of Zanmi Lasante ("Partners in Health" in Haitian Kreyol) is being brought to other clinics and hospitals. Working with non-governmental agencies and the Haitian Ministry of Health this model brings much needed health care to Haiti's poorest citizens.

Please join us for a slide show and informative talk.

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

As we are coming to the end of our annual calendar of events, I would like to reflect upon what a wonderful year we have had so far. The Program Committee has done a great job in getting fabulous speakers for our meetings. The weather, although very snowy, has cooperated with our scheduling of the meetings. Our Membership Team has done a great job recruiting, along with the help of every branch member; we have seven new members since September. I think this has been a banner year for our branch.

I hope you were able to attend our February meeting on that cold and icy night when Kay Campbell told us the story of Effat-al-Thunayan who was the only woman in Saudi Arabia to ever hold the title of Queen. It was a very interesting meeting. Thank you, Kay.

Our Social Chair, Susan Mahan, has planned a great evening for our Annual Dinner on May 10th, so please save the date.

Once again I invite you to join us at the National Convention in Washington, D.C., June 16-19, 2011. There are 5 members of the Hingham Branch attending the convention. If you would like to join us please let Hollie or Sheila know.

I hope to see you all at the Weymouth Public Library on Broad Street at 7:00 PM on Tuesday, March 8th when we will hear about Hospitals, Healthcare, and Humanity.

Sheila Doherty

BOOK GROUP

The March book is [Let the Great World Spin](#).

I have an arrangement with the Cohasset Library to have many copies of the book we are reading available for the AAUW Book Club. For example, right now you can pick up a copy of the book, "Let the Great World Spin" with your town library card. Read it and come to the book discussion on March 2nd (I think that's the date). It couldn't be easier. When you request the book in Cohasset, mention AAUW and Lynne O'Brien -- they wouldn't want to give the books out to just anyone!!! I hope this will encourage more of you to join the book group. Carol

ADVENTURES IN DINING

Our next adventures in Dining experience will be at Stockholders in Weymouth, on Thursday, March 10, at 6:30 p.m. Here is the link to the menu: http://www.stockholderssteakhouse.com/?page_id=16

Please join us and R.S.V.P. to Sondra at beesnees@comcast.net or 781-383-1245

MAY BANQUET

The May banquet will be held on May 10 at 6:30 pm at Reggio's Restaurant in Norwell. We will be having a buffet that includes fresh Italian bread and butter, house salad with homemade dressing, penne marinara, chicken parmigiana, and meatballs. There will be a coffee and tea station and trays of pastries for dessert. **Other beverages must be paid for in cash that night.** To reserve a place send a check for \$25.00, made out to "AAUW Hingham," to me at 18 Grove Street, East Weymouth, MA 02189.

Please contact me if you have any questions. ***I hope to see you all there!***

Susan Mahan, Social Committee

*Reggio Ristorante & Catering
42 Washington Street (Route 53)
Norwell, MA 02061
781 – 982 – 5505*

**We are located just seconds from the Jct. of Route 228 & Route 53 which is
Queen Anne's Corner on the Hingham / Norwell border*

From Boston & points north:

Take Route 93 south to Route 3 south. Take exit # 14 off Route 3. At end of exit, go to light and turn left (at Home Depot). Go to third light and turn right onto Route 53 south. Go 1/8 of a mile to Reggio Ristorante on the right side. (We are between Citizen's Bank & Taco Bell).

From Plymouth and points south:

Take Route 3 north to exit # 14. Go right off the exit. Go to next light and turn right onto Route 53 south. Go 1/8 of a mile to Reggio Ristorante on the right side (We are between Citizen's Bank & Taco Bell).

From Framingham and points west:

Take 128 south to the end until it turns into 93 north. Stay on this for a short while until the junction of Route 3, then take Route 3 south (towards Cape Cod). Take exit # 14 off Route 3. At end of exit, go to light and turn left (at Home Depot). Go to third light and turn right onto Route 53 south. Go 1/8 of a mile to Reggio Ristorante on the right side (We are between Citizen's Bank & Taco Bell).

PUBLIC POLICY

Congresswomen Electrify Planned Parenthood Abortion Debate: The House may have voted to strip Planned Parenthood of funding, but the personal stories from Gwen Moore and Jackie Speier about an unplanned pregnancy and an abortion inspired women everywhere. The two congresswomen tell Michelle Goldberg why they decided to speak out. <http://www.thedailybeast.com/blogs-and-stories/2011-02-18/congresswomen-electrify-planned-parenthood-abortion-debate/?cid=tag:all1>

New Information on the Wage Gap: the Bureau of Labor Statistics released a chart illustrating the gender wage gap for full-time work by industry. Overall, women in wage and salary jobs had median weekly earnings of \$657 in 2009 compared with \$819 for men. Though these averages show women's earnings at 80 percent of men's, there were marked variations in the wage gap by industry. The largest gaps in women's-to-men's earnings ratios were seen in financial activities (71 percent) and other services (72 percent), and the smallest gaps were found in construction (92 percent) and agriculture and related industries (85 percent). In education and health services, where the largest segment of full-time women workers are employed (38%), women earn 77 percent of men's salaries.

AAUW is committed to supporting fairness in compensation, equitable access and advancement in employment, and vigorous enforcement of employment antidiscrimination statutes. This year, **Equal Pay Day is April 12.**

Women Veterans File Class-Action Lawsuit : A group of U.S. veterans filed a federal class-action lawsuit against the Department of Defense this week. The suit calls for the Pentagon to address the hostile environment in which complaints of sexual assault in the military are allegedly met. Under existing policy, commanding officers "act as judge and jury" in cases of sexual assault, and in many cases charges are not filed against assailants. The plaintiffs' case is supported by a 2008 survey of 103 military sexual assault victims that revealed nearly half of military women did not report a rape due to the fear of ostracism and the belief that nothing would be done. A DOD report further substantiates claims of an ineffective system, showing that when women come forward to report an assault, fewer than 20 percent of cases are referred for court martial. In the suit, plaintiffs suggest alternative measures to more effectively deal with complaints, including having an objective third party handle sexual assault charges instead of commanding officers.

Depression, Finances Cause Students to Drop Out of College: A new study by Michigan State University identifies the major factors causing students to consider dropping out of college, including depression and loss of financial aid. Surprisingly, events such as a death in the family or the failure to get accepted into their desired major do not significantly influence students' decisions to leave school. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, more than two-fifths of US students fail to receive a bachelor's degree within six years at the institution where they began their studies.

The new analysis may help combat college withdrawal by identifying appropriate counseling or assistance programs schools should target to better aid students.

IRS Deems Breast Pumps Tax Deductible : the Internal Revenue Service ruled that breast pump purchases are tax deductible. The ruling will now allow women to purchase the expensive equipment with pretax flexible spending accounts. For women without such accounts, but for whom medical expenses exceed 7.5 percent of their adjusted gross income, the purchase will be tax deductible. The deduction was previously untenable because the IRS refused to classify breast pumps as medical devices, calling them “feeding equipment.” Supporters of this change cite the medical benefits of breastfeeding for both mothers and the babies.

Women and the Affordable Care Act: In the Huffington Post, Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius applauds the Affordable Care Act for advancing women’s health. Calling the Affordable Care Act the “strongest women’s health law since Medicare,” Secretary Sebelius encouraged readers to view a new women’s health page on the Health.gov website. The new webpage details improvements to women’s coverage and preventive health under the Affordable Care Act.

AAUW Seeking Successful Programs in STEM for Women at Community Colleges: AAUW has announced a new research project to examine best practices in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education for women in community colleges. AAUW will analyze existing research literature on women in community colleges in STEM and produce case studies of 5-7 programs that have been successful in recruiting, retaining and helping women complete STEM programs in community colleges. To nominate a program, please provide a contact person for each program to research-aauw@aauw.org. For more information contact Andresse St. Rose, EdD, Senior Researcher, AAUW at strosea@aauw.org.

Women’s Health Targeted as Political Pawn: A recent overview of state-level reproductive health legislation revealed a widespread attempt across multiple levels of government to limit women’s access to comprehensive health care. Since the 1973 Supreme Court decision, *Roe V. Wade*, state legislatures have enacted nearly 400 measures limiting women’s access to reproductive health services. Presently, over half of all bills introduced in state legislatures aim to restrict women’s access to comprehensive care, up from 40 percent last year.

On Capitol Hill, legislation in the House, aimed at restricting women’s access to comprehensive health care, has prompted speculation about the viability of such legislation in the Senate. Numerous senators, including Senators Patty Murray (D-WA), Al Franken (D-MI), Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), and Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), have vowed to block the measures from passing in the Senate.

Military Policies on Sexual Assault Ignite Criticism: Thousands of women who have experienced sexual assault in the military are calling for accountability from the Department of Defense. A 2008 survey of 103 military sexual assault victims revealed that half of the women did not report a rape due to fear of ostracism and the belief that nothing would be done about it. Susan Avila-Smith, who runs the military sexual trauma advocacy group VETWOW, says that rape victims face a hostile environment in the military, where many are intimidated into silence by their commanding officers. Though the DOD has implemented measures that attempt to address these issues, including a reporting option where women can seek counseling and remain anonymous, their current policies have been criticized for failing to effectively address the issues of officer and assailant accountability. Next week, a class-action lawsuit will be filed on behalf of military sexual assault survivors asking for damages and changes in the military’s practices.

Unmarried Women Comprise Key, Growing Voting Block: A recent report reveals that unmarried women are a growing and important segment of the electorate. The “marriage gap” that has appeared among female voters shows that unmarried women are less likely to register or vote than married women, and when they do vote, they make different choices as a group. With unmarried women representing about 25 percent of the voting age public, some are suggesting that exit polls should include a question on marital status; currently most do not.

Calls for Recusal on Potential Challenge to Health Care Law: Two Supreme Court justices, Elena Kagan and Clarence Thomas, are facing calls to recuse themselves should a challenge to the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act come before the high court. Last week, Senator Orrin Hatch (R-UT) asked Justice Kagan to recuse herself from any such case, alleging her previous position as Solicitor General within the Obama administration would bias her ruling. This week, seventy-four Democrats in the House signed a letter demanding Justice Thomas also recuse himself due to his wife’s

employment advocating against the health care reform. Section 3(C)(1) of the code of conduct for U.S. judges lists reasons for judges to recuse themselves, including if the judge's spouse has a financial interest in the outcome of a case or if the judge has been a lawyer on the matter. Many predict the Court to be sharply divided on any challenge to health care reform, and recusal of any judge could shift the Court's decision.

Women Senators Vow Civility: If you have ever noticed a distinct lack of partisan vitriol between female senators, there is a reason: the 17 women currently serving in the Senate have decided to disagree with civility. Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-MD), dean of the Senate women, led the way years ago, establishing regular, off-the-record dinners for women senators. In light of recent partisan bickering, some believe such leadership could hold the key for a more productive tone in Congress and willingness to compromise despite wide ideological differences.

New Members of Congress Face Reality of Paying for Health Insurance: The 16 Republican freshman representatives who turned down federal health insurance are now feeling the pain of living in the United States without coverage. All House Republicans voted to repeal health care reform last month, but some of those facing skyrocketing monthly insurance premiums and the struggles of affording medical care with pre-existing conditions have decided to reevaluate their original campaign pledges. Interestingly, most freshman Republicans accepted government health insurance, and did so at a rate just slightly lower than all other federal employees.

Egyptian Women at Frontlines of Revolution: Women are playing a crucial role in the ongoing revolution in Egypt. In the past, Egyptian women have been hesitant to join protests out of the very real fear of rampant street harassment and sexual assault, but not this time around. Women have not only been attending protests with few reported incidents of assault or harassment, they are at the forefront of the revolutionary change happening in their country. Although much of the news cycle shows men chanting in the streets, women are filling Tahrir Square.

LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY UPDATES

New Federal Regulations to Affect AAUW Book Sales: AAUW branches holding book sales must be aware of new lead regulations now in effect. Two facts must be known before selling any book. First, is the book intended for children 12 and younger? If not, there are no restrictions on its sale. If yes, was it published before 1986? If not, there are also no restrictions on its sale. If yes, the branch must either not sell the book or get it certified as safe by a CSPC lab. Please contact AAUW's regulatory affairs manager Beth Scott at scottb@aauw.org if the presence of lead is confirmed during this testing.

While branches must comply with current regulation for now, AAUW believes the overly strict law should be changed. We are lobbying Congress to end this regulation by passing H.R. 272. It would exempt books from the CSPC's lead standards.

Continuing Resolution Cuts Threaten Key Programs: With the House of Representatives poised to pass the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act, 2011 (H.R. 1), the Senate is all that stands between a sensible budget and House proposed cuts that would hurt ordinary Americans and have a detrimental impact on our economy.

The House proposed \$100 billion funding cuts would fall unfairly on the backs of students, women, and working families by terminating or cutting funding for several important programs. These programs collectively encourage students to get their education from pre-school to the university level, provide access to job training and health care, protect workers against discrimination and help elderly Americans stay in their homes.

Despite a voice vote defeating the amendment last night, the House passed (240-185) Representative Mike Pence's (R-IN) amendment to prohibit federal funding for Planned Parenthood. Representative Jackie Speier (D-CA), who spoke at AAUW's 2009 national convention, gave an impassioned speech during debate last night, accusing the other side of using women's health as a political pawn.

Members of the House remained at the Capitol until early this morning debating amendments to the Act but have yet to take a final vote. The bill is expected to pass along party lines following debate on the scores of amendments to the bill. The current continuing resolution runs out on March 4.

House Efforts to Restrict Women's Healthcare : Beyond the Pence amendment, the House Energy and Commerce Committee voted favorably to report legislation (H.R. 358) restricting all health plans receiving federal funding from covering abortion. The legislation encroaches further on women's personal health care by seeking to prevent women from

paying for abortion coverage with their own money and allowing physicians to refuse care and referrals to women, even to save their lives. This bill, introduced by Representative Joseph Pitts (R-PA), now moves on to the Rules Committee. AAUW supports the right of every woman to safe, accessible, affordable and comprehensive family planning and reproductive health services. Recent attempts in the House to limit this right are unconscionable steps in the wrong direction.

President's Budget Cuts, Supports Key Programs: President Barack Obama released his budget proposal for Fiscal Year 2012. Among proposed spending cuts, the president's budget would terminate the Women's Education Equity Act. WEEA has served as a symbol of the government's commitment to gender equity in education since former Representative Patsy Takemoto Mink (D-HI) first introduced the legislation in 1974. On the brighter side, the administration continues its effort to invest in education and has pledged to protect Pell Grants. While the budget includes cuts to certain Pell programs, including summer aid, it is a stark contrast to the budget currently under consideration in the House, which would cut the maximum Pell award by 15 percent.

AAUW's believes in a strong system of public education that promotes gender fairness, equity, and diversity, and advocates increased support for, and access to, higher education for women and other disadvantaged populations.

Take Action! Urge your senator to oppose the drastic funding cuts proposed in the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act, 2011 (H.R. 1) that would cut \$100 billion from FY11 appropriations.

End to Bush-era Conscience Clause: The Obama administration announced that it is ending a Bush-era federal regulation that let health care workers opt out of providing a broad range of medical services, such as providing the emergency contraceptive Plan B, treating gay men and lesbians, and prescribing birth control to single women. The new version of the regulation leaves in place long-standing federal protections for health care workers who object to performing abortions or sterilizations.

National Fight Over School Vouchers Focuses on DC Schools: The Washington, D.C., school voucher program, known as the "Opportunity Scholarship Program," was a hot topic on Capitol Hill. At a Senate hearing, Senators Joseph Lieberman (I-CT) and Susan Collins (R-ME) threatened to cut funding to D.C. public schools if the voucher program was not extended. The threat was particularly unsettling to D.C. Mayor Vincent Gray (D), who was at the hearing to testify against vouchers. On the House side, Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) continued his efforts to reinvigorate the program. In a calculated move, House Republicans added \$15.5 million in funding for D.C. vouchers to the proposed continuing resolution on the budget. In a February 9 floor statement, Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC) advocated against vouchers and the Federal Government's encroachment of D.C. home rule.

Woman Likely to Fill Vacated House Seat: In the wake of Representative Chris Lee's (R-NY) resignation, two women are expected to compete for the vacant House seat in New York's 26th district. Erie County Clerk Kathleen C. Hochul (D) and Assemblywoman Jane L. Corwin (R) have emerged as frontrunners in the forthcoming special election. Both women are expected to receive their respective party's nomination.

Judicial Confirmations and Vacancies : the Senate confirmed three of President Barack Obama's non-controversial judicial nominations: Marco Hernandez to the District of Oregon, Diana Saldana to the Southern District of Texas, and Paul Holmes to the Western District of Arkansas. All three nominees were approved with broad bipartisan support. While these three nominations have been confirmed, judicial vacancies continue to rise, with six judges retiring in the past six weeks. The current and avoidable vacancy crisis burdens the legal system by causing a backlog of cases, with some judges being assigned thousands of cases at a time.

Regulatory Process Faces Scrutiny: The business community has recommended reversing more than 150 industry regulations following a request from Representative Darrell Issa (R-CA) for areas of focus for the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. The regulation reversals suggested run the gamut from overturning greenhouse gas restrictions to executive pay disclosures, but they are claimed to share one common feature: costing jobs. However, despite wielding the buzzword du jour, businesses have not provided evidence to back up such claims. Suggestions by environmental groups, labor unions and consumer groups were not sought by the House committee.

AAUW supports equitable access and advancement in employment, including vigorous enforcement of employment antidiscrimination statutes. Recommendations to Issa suggest rolling back legislative victories aimed to protect the health and safety of American workers and consumers. Setting a precedent of doing so without evidence of actual job harms is a dangerous proposition for women's hard fought wins for economic equity.